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# THE NEW YORKER

SEPT. 3, 2001

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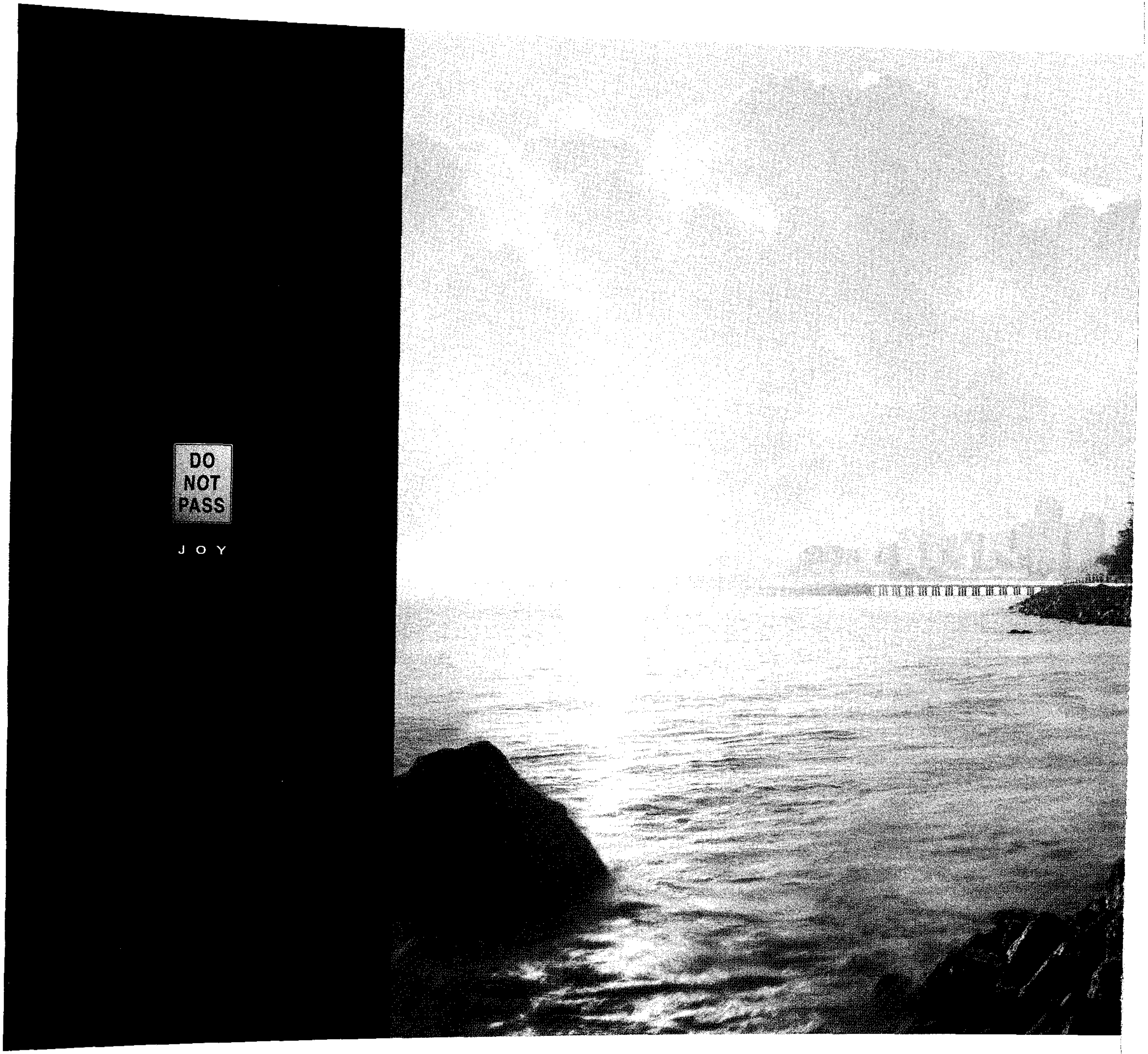

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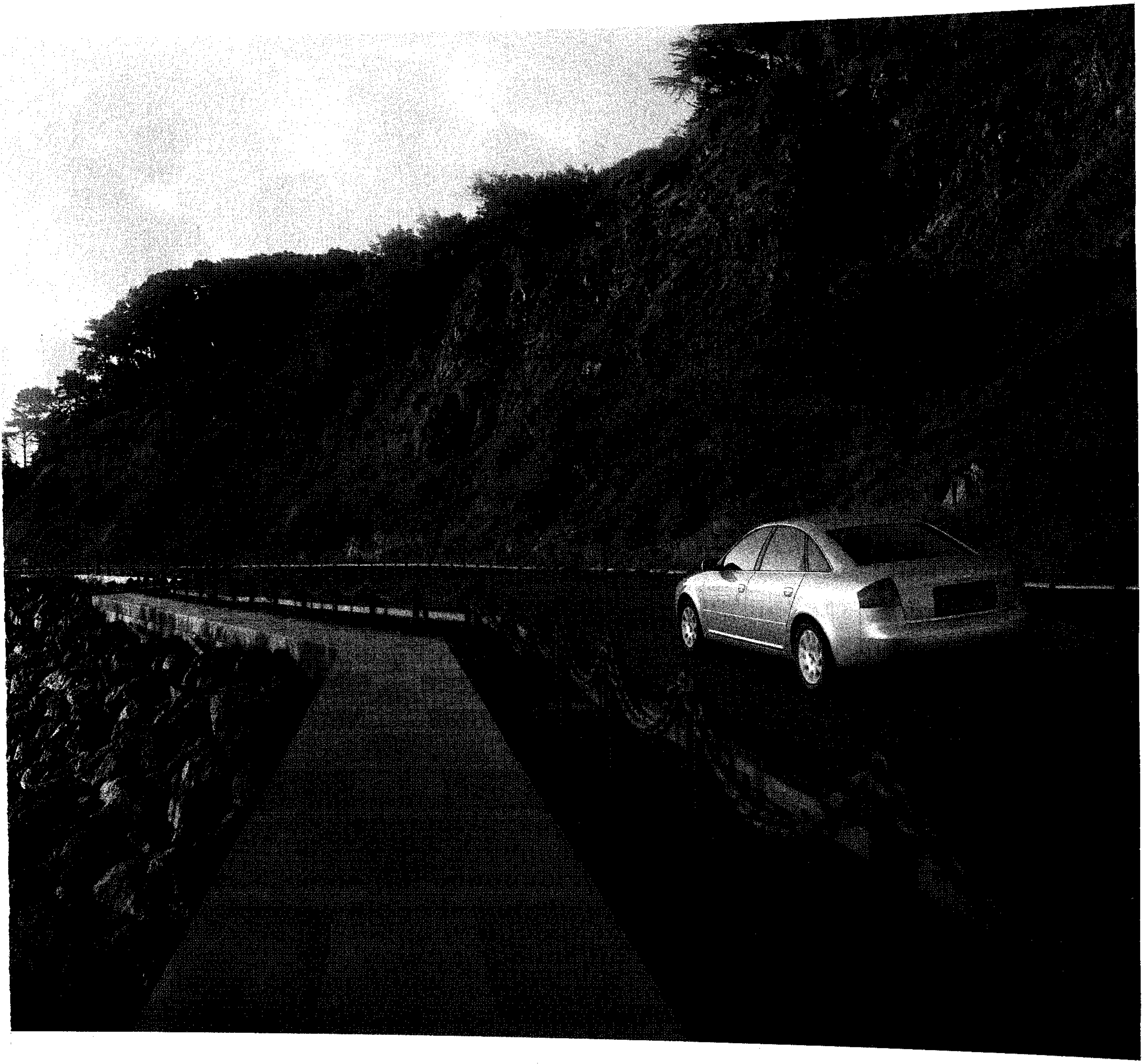

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—*Newsday*

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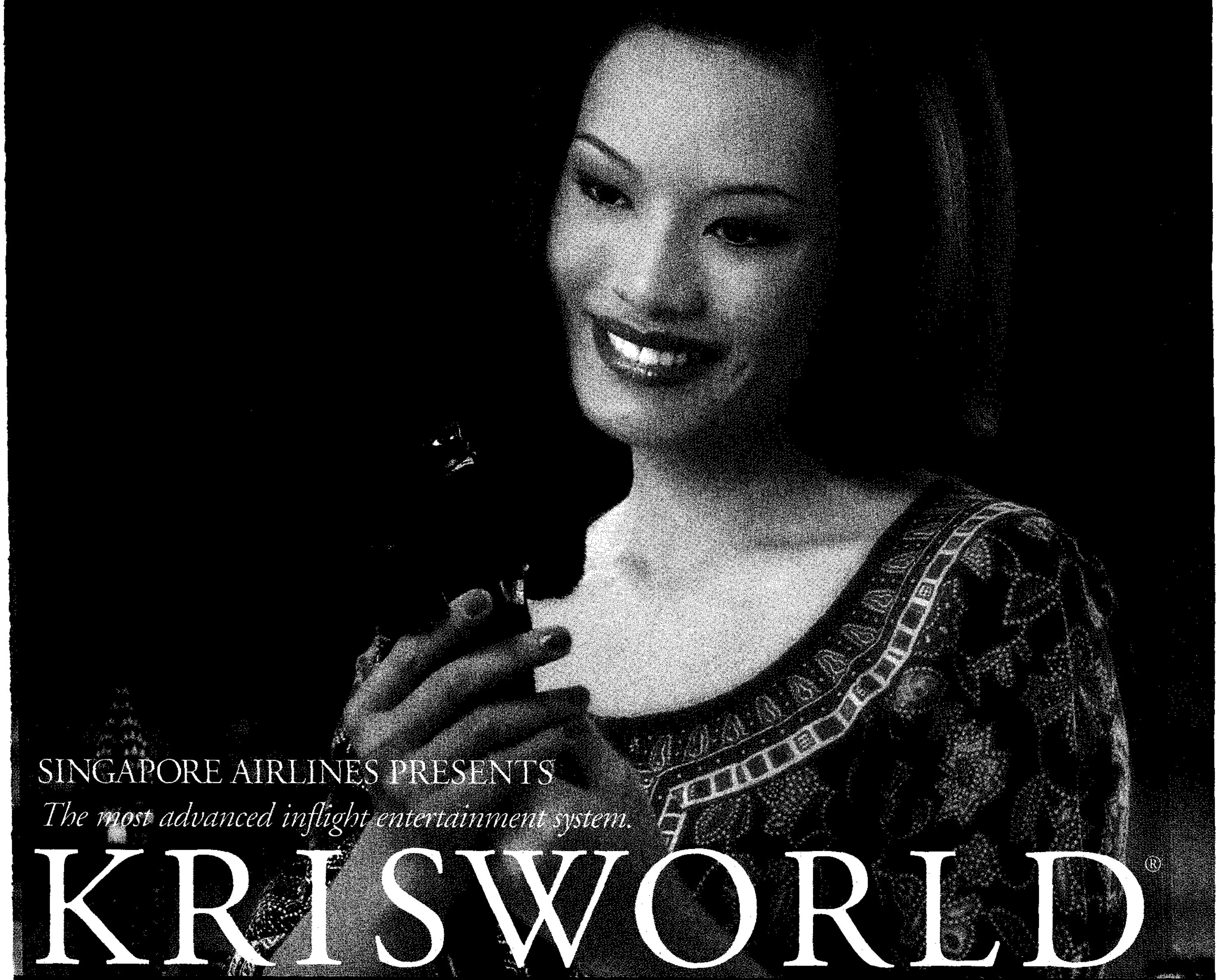

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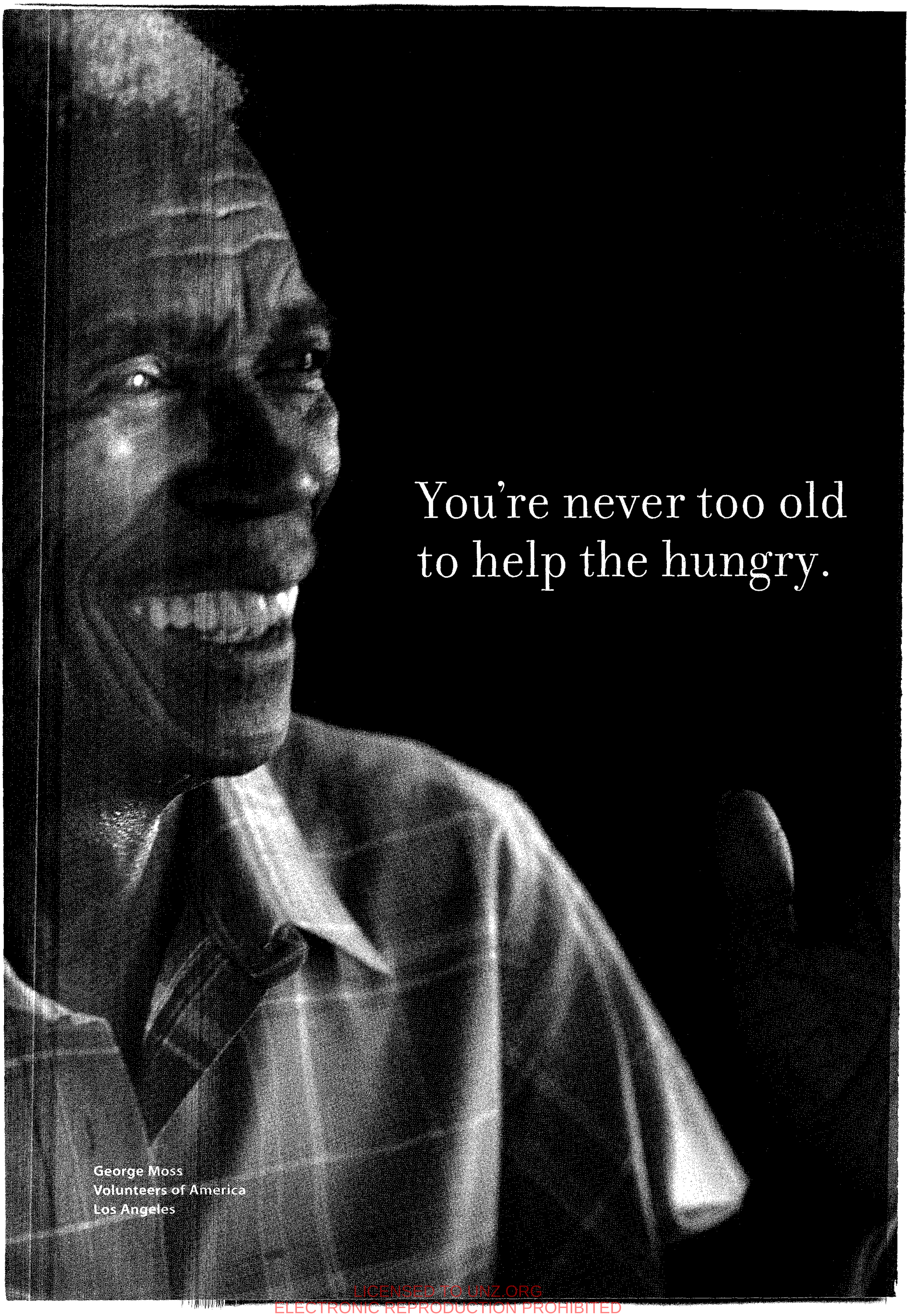
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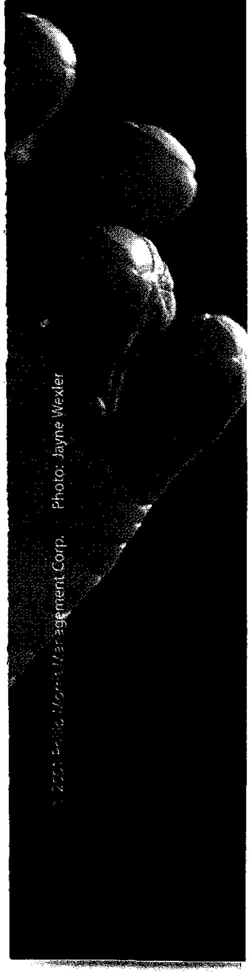
George Moss
Volunteers of America
Los Angeles

VOLUNTEER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



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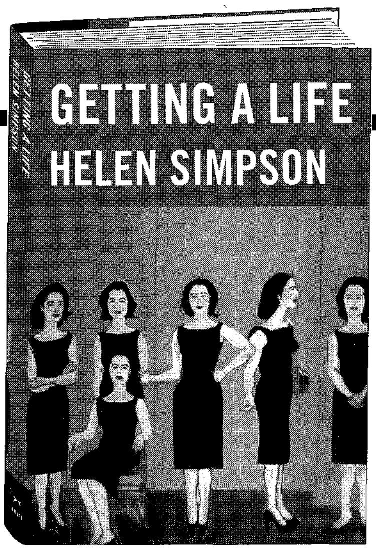

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# CONTRIBUTORS

W. G. Sebald (Fiction, p. 50) is the author of "The Emigrants," "The Rings of Saturn," and "Vertigo." His new novel, "Austerlitz," will be published in October by Random House.

David Samuels ("The Runner," p. 72) is writing a novel.

Elizabeth Kolbert ("Big Ticket Item," p. 36), a staff writer, covers New York politics for the magazine.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 34) writes a weekly column on business affairs.

Stephen Stepanchev (Poem, p. 63) has published ten books of poetry, including, most recently, "Seven Horizons."

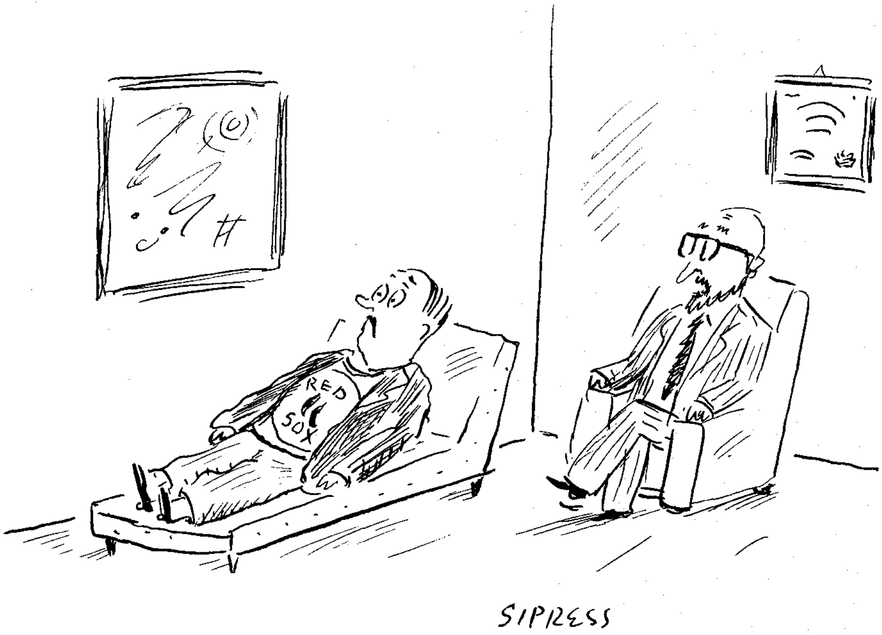
Calvin Trillin ("New Grub Streets," p. 42; The Back Page, p. 98) has written three books on eating which have been published as a collection, "The Tummy Trilogy."

John Updike (Books, p. 92) is a regular contributor of fiction and literary criticism.

Judith Thurman (Books, p. 86) is the author of "Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette."

Jeffrey Toobin (The Talk of the Town, p. 31) has been a staff writer since 1993.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 96) is a film critic for the magazine and the author of "Great Books." ♦



*"Rooting for them is a disease, Ben. It's nothing to be ashamed of."*

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# THE MAIL

## THE FIRE LAST TIME

"Apocalypse Now Redux," Francis Ford Coppola's recut, expanded version of his 1979 film, may deserve all the praise Anthony Lane gives it, but that should not prevent the "old" version from remaining the definitive one (A Critic at Large, August 6th). Igor Stravinsky, to take one example, revised some of his compositions, and comparisons are both interesting and important. The same is true of Coppola's film. The goal of filmmaking is not always clarity of vision. The very uncertainty one feels as the older version of the film moves toward its end (rather than its conclusion) is part of what makes the experience of "Apocalypse Now" what it is—or, at least, was, until this new version came along. Older artists may be better able to clarify what they were unsure of in the past, but that doesn't necessarily make the works better, regardless of what the artist has to say. As with many great art works, "Apocalypse Now" already has a life of its own.

*Christopher Shultis*
*Professor of Music, University of New Mexico*
*Albuquerque, N.M.*

## SAVING THE KING

Isabel Hilton's article on the murder of Nepal's King, Queen, and several of their relatives made it clear that what happened at the palace may never be irrefutably resolved ("Royal Blood," July 30th). But her story was also a reminder that the persistent questions—who, why, what if?—should not obscure the task of pulling a nation back from the precipice. The Maoist insurgency Hilton describes is only one of the problems paralyzing Nepal. In spite of what the Crown Prince allegedly perpetrated, the institution of the monarchy is a bulwark against the excesses of our times. It may be amusing for observers to ascribe concocted motives to our new King, Gyanendra; for us in Nepal, however, it would be more useful to be sympathetic to the King's loss of nearly a dozen members of his family under the saddest of circumstances, and to move on.

*Ranjit Rauniyar*
*Kathmandu, Nepal*

## EATING FOR ENGLAND

Rebecca Mead undermines the praise she gives the average Briton for gastronomic sophistication by insisting that this is a recent, drastic change ("Food, Glorious Food!," August 6th). This is hardly the case. The poor reputation of British cooking among Americans can be blamed, in part, on the war years, when G.I.s sampled food prepared under the deprivations of rationing. But, by the nineteen-fifties and sixties, more Britons could afford to vacation in Italy and France, and were exposed to new cuisines, while writers such as Elizabeth David were teaching us how to cook. And, once Britain joined the Common Market, in 1973, it enjoyed a greater variety of produce and cheeses—much greater, it must be said, than that available in America outside its largest cities.

*Karen Twyman*
*Alliance, Ohio*

## GENIUS IN DISGUISE

Steven Johnson derides the contents of several files sent to strangers by the SirCam computer worm (The Talk of the Town, August 13th) as "stirring creative efforts": one of them, he notes, actually "begins with Rabbi Isidor Chemelwitz giving a funeral sermon about an old dead Jewish woman." This is, in fact, the opening of Tony Kushner's "Angels in America," which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1993. Perhaps SirCam should be forwarding its files to the prize committee.

*Jeff Whitty*
*New York City*

•

*Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, N.Y. 10036-6592. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.*

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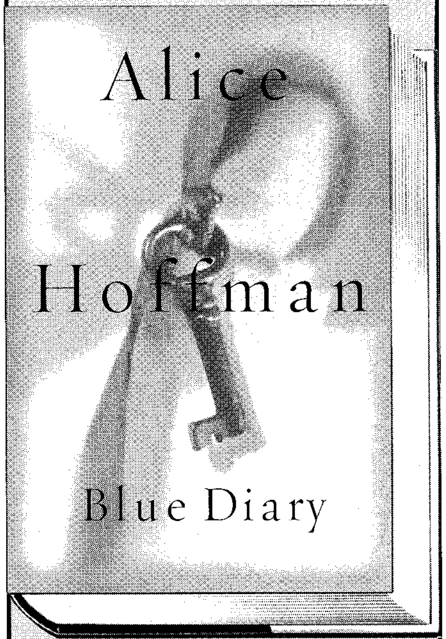

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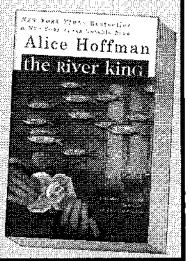
—Kirkus Reviews



Alice Hoffman's
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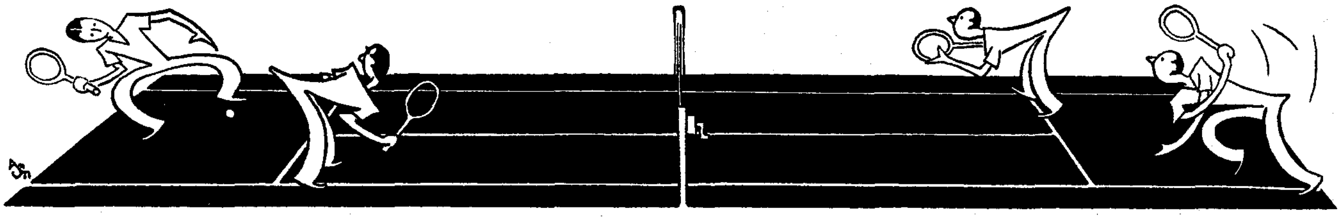
# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



## THE THEATRE
## OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

*Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.*

**FIRST LOVE**
Ruth Maleczech and Frederick Neumann portray two strangers whose lives are transformed by a chance meeting, in a play by Charles Mee. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

**HELSINOR**
At the outset of Todd Alcott's take on "Hamlet," which stars James Urbaniak, the king is still alive and running the country badly. Sheri Graubert, Chuck Montgomery, Steven Rattazzi, and Sean Runnette are also in the cast. In previews. (Present Company Theatorium, 198 Stanton St. 420-8877.)

**LOVE**
The former television writer and producer David S. Rosenthal's first play, which was inspired by his overwhelming desire to bed a particular supermodel. Previews begin Sept. 4. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 307-1300.)

**TALE OF 2CITIES: AN AMERICAN JOYRIDE ON MULTIPLE TRACKS**
In her latest project, the "standup novelist" Heather Woodbury uses the Dodgers' departure from Brooklyn in 1957 to examine notions of home and community. The six-part series, which will take place at six different venues, begins Aug. 29 at 8. (Galapagos Arts Space, 70 North St., Brooklyn. 718-384-4586.)

**RUDE ENTERTAINMENT**
Three one-acts by Paul Rudnick ("Mr. Charles, Currently of Palm Beach," "Very Special Needs," and "On the Fence"). The cast includes Peter Bartlett, Harriet Harris, and Neal Huff. Christopher Ashley is the director. Previews begin Aug. 31. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

**URINETOWN**
Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis's musical comedy about a city in the throes of ecological disaster, starring John Cullum, has moved to Broadway. John Rando is the director. In previews. (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

## OPENED RECENTLY

**THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM DIRECTING CABARET**
The annual summer series presents two-night-only stagings of short works directed by emerging artists. The festival continues through Sept. 2. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

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**BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL**
A kind of "My Fair Bat Boy," in which a half-bat, half-man—memorably played by Deven May—emerges from his childhood cave into adult bourgeois life. But the musical world he enters is one of darkness, not light, of ironies, not idealism, where plot is a history of abdications and song extolls the emptiness of all the standard credos—Christianity, family, community, love, redemption—and of the musical form itself. It's a jejune vision, but a smart, playful, and funny one nonetheless. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/9/01.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

**BAT THEATRE COMPANY**
Presenting five plays in repertory. Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays at 7: Lillian Mortimer's "No Mother to Guide Her." ♦ Thursdays at 7, Saturdays at 3 and 7, and Sundays at 3: Walter Woods's "Billy the Kid." ♦ Mondays at 9, Thursdays at 10, and Fridays and Saturdays at midnight: "Ajax," by Alice Tuan. ♦ Saturdays and Sundays at 1: "Cleveland," by Mac Wellman. ♦ Fridays at 10 and Mondays at 7: "Sincerity Forever," by Mr. Wellman. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes Sept. 10.)

**BLAST!**
A musical extravaganza, which evolved from the drum-and-bugle corps Star of Indiana. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

**BLUE**
In Charles Randolph-Wright's memory play, a trumpet player named Reuben Clark (Hill Harper) returns to his childhood in a small South Carolina town, where his family owns the only African-American funeral parlor, run by his beautiful, narcissistic, upwardly mobile mother, Peggy (Phylicia Rashad). Unfortunately, Reuben's entire transition to manhood—his leaving home, his rejection of the trumpet, his therapy, and his final coming to terms with his mother—takes place offstage. What we are left with is a patina of literacy and boulevard lyricism but no internal life. (7/9/01) (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 9.)

**CHICAGO CITY LIMITS**
The improv company presents a new revue, "Chicago City Limits Turns 20: Now and Forever . . . and We Mean It." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, 1105 First Ave., at 61st St. 888-5233.)

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM A COCKROACH**
Don Marquis's poet cockroach, Archy, and his pal Mehitabel the cat come to the stage, embodied by Ralph Lee's beautiful and expressive puppets. These tales of New York in the twenties—including a hilariously poignant excursion to Long Island and a ditty about Prohibition—have held up surprisingly well. It's a glimpse not just into the city but also into the tales we all tell ourselves in order to survive in it. Mr. Lee, who adapted the works with Scott Cargle, has created a show that manages to charm kids and make adults smile ruefully. Neal Kirkwood's music, performed live, adds a jazzy, edgy note. (For venue and schedule information, call 479-7710. Closes Sept. 16.)

**DOWN SOUTH**
In a comedy by Doug Field, the Rattlestick Theatre takes aim at the Cuban-missile crisis. (224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 30.)

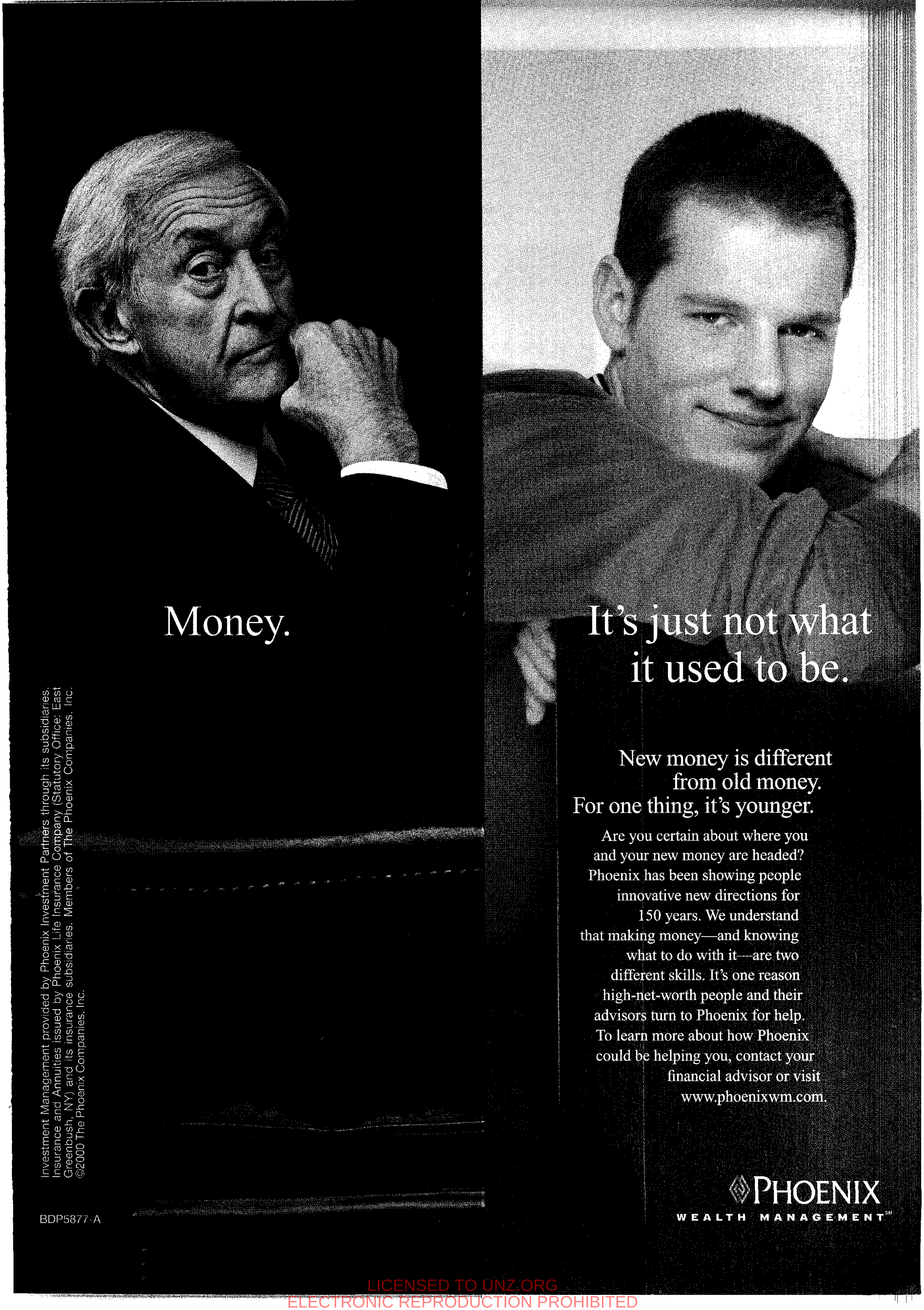
**42ND STREET**
As a domineering diva who breaks her ankle before the big opening night, the wonderful Christine Ebersole steals the show in this revival of the 1980 tap musical based on the 1933 film. But it has to be said: it was probably easy to do. As the young chorine who steps in to save the day, Kate Levering doesn't have enough star power to shine above the legions of hoofers who crowd the stage, and Michael Cumpsty, as the gruff director, is sorely miscast. Still, if this sort of show is your cup of tea, the songs are wonderful and the dancing is fine—just know that the cup is not quite full. (Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

**HELLO MUDDAH, HELLO FADDUH!**
A musical by Doug Bernstein and Rob Krausz, inspired by the Allan Sherman song of the same name, which follows the relationship of a couple from their childhood days at Camp Grenada to marriage in suburbia to retirement in Florida. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

**HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL**
Outdoor performances of "Romeo and Juliet," directed by Terrence O'Brien. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 845-265-9575. Closes Sept. 5.)

**IF YOU EVER LEAVE ME, I'M GOING WITH YOU!**
From the husband-and-wife acting and comedy-writing team Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna, a play about their thirty-six-year relationship—which has included a wedding reception on "The Merv Griffin Show" and the renewal of their marriage vows five times. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

**THE IRISH . . . AND HOW THEY GOT THAT WAY**
This revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes," is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by



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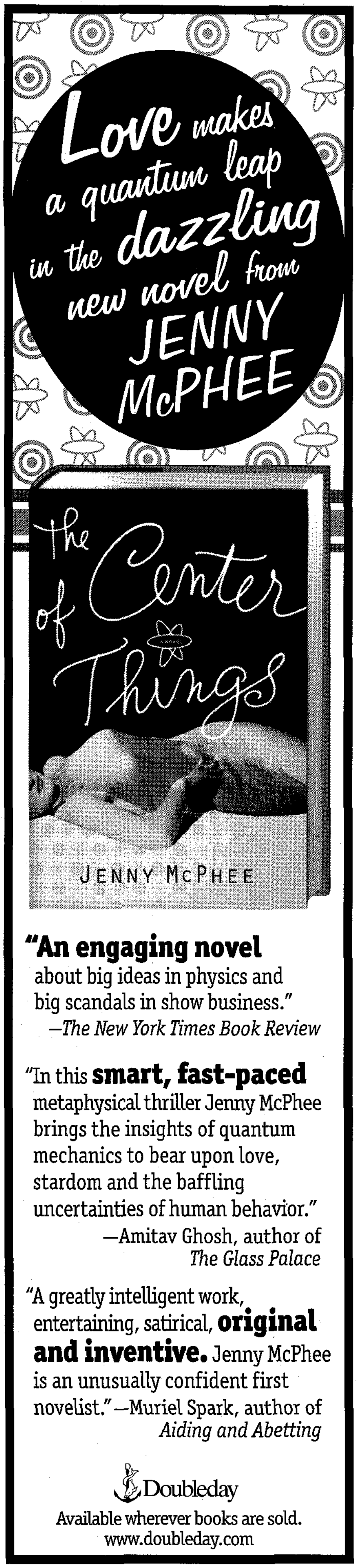
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A Novel
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a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. McCourt's stories of the potato famine are heart-wrenching, and his view that the privation gave the rather dreamy Irish a hard streak of fortitude lends poignance to his mostly lighthearted portrayal of the travails of Irish-Americans. As in "Angela's Ashes," tragedy is always present, but here even more than in the book it's leavened by achievement and a great deal of humor. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Sept. 23.)

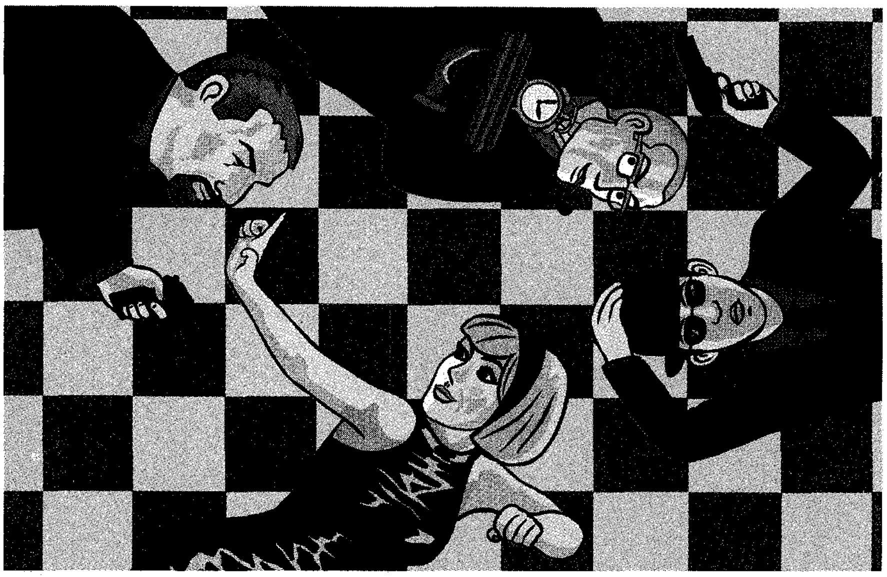
**LOBBY HERO**
In another era, the contrivances of Kenneth Lonergan's new play would have been called hokum. But because Lonergan is the writer and director of the moving and successful film "You Can Count on Me" and the author of the acclaimed plays "This Is Our Youth" and "The Waverly Gallery" the public is expecting him to aim high. He does, and misses. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 2.)

**LOVE, JANIS**
A musical play about Janis Joplin, built around her songs, writings, and interviews. Though it contains no new insight, it's a useful corrective to the drunken, drug-addicted legend, and the production is a fine one. Randal Myler directed with a sure eye for the telling detail, and the seven-member band really cooks. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

**MAJOR BARBARA**
Cherry Jones, as a major in the Salvation Army, and David Warner, as her rich munitions-manufacturer father, Andrew Undershaft, square off in this revival of George Bernard Shaw's 1905 examination of the social order, under the direction of Daniel Sullivan. Shaw's merry-prankster ironies on the subjects of salvation and capitalism are no less timely today than they were a hundred years ago, but the play has built-in dramatic limits. When it comes to actual human beings, Shaw is perhaps too clever by half; one could say that there is nothing at stake but the future of humanity. Also with Zak Orth and Dana Ivey, who, as the practical matriarch of the Undershaft family, provides unknowingly witty commentary on the essential nature of family values. (7/30/01) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes Sept. 16.)

**THE MOON IN VAIN**
Rae C. Wright portrays the actress Irina Arkadina in the first installment of a triptych inspired by Chekhov's "The Seagull," set a year after the original play's end. Written by Ms. Wright and Lee Gundersheimer. Tuesdays through Thursdays, through Aug. 30. (Dixon Place, 309 E. 26th St. 532-1546.)

**MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**
The Aquila Theatre Company's version of Shakespeare's comedy, set in London in the sixties. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 529-4530. Closes Sept. 16.)


*The Aquila Theatre Company's production of "Much Ado About Nothing."*

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

**THE PRODUCERS**
High-camp heaven from Mel Brooks, who wrote the music and the lyrics for this monster-hit version of his 1968 movie—in which two scoundrels try to bilk their investors by staging a surefire failure, entitled "Springtime for Hitler." The performing centerpiece of the show is Nathan Lane, as the flamboyant huckster Max Bialystock; his kind of high-amperage panache is in limited supply these days, and both he and the excellent Matthew Broderick, as the hapless accountant Leo Bloom, deliver the mail. Expertly staged by Susan Stroman. (5/7/01) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**SAINT LUCY'S EYES**
Ruby Dee portrays a back-room abortionist in civil-rights-era Memphis, in an encore staging of Bridgette A. Wimberly's drama. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 2.)

**SIX GOUMBAS AND A WANNABE**
A group of friends from the same Brooklyn neighborhood arrange a reunion after fifteen years apart, in a comedy by Vincent Gogliormella. (Players, 115 MacDougal St. 239-6200.)

**SNATCHES**
The taped conversations between Monica Lewinsky and Linda Tripp are the basis for a comedy by Laura Strausfeld. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 873-9050.)

**STONES IN HIS POCKETS**
Marie Jones's play is set in an Irish village where a big-budget Hollywood movie is being made. Conleth Hill and Seán Campion play two extras in the movie and all thirteen other characters as well. Though the play has its clever ways when it comes to sending up both Hollywood and Irish mores, the stories told here aren't anything you haven't seen before. (4/16/01) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**A THOUSAND CLOWNS**
Tom Selleck is the eccentric Murray Burns, in a revival of Herb Gardner's 1962 comedy. John Rando is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

**TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!**
The title represents the late author Jonathan Larson's fear of time running out on his musical dreams. The show is set on the eve of the composer's thirtieth birthday—his Walpurgisnacht—as he is caught between the pressures to succeed and to settle. The slick, hardworking cast of three is well directed by Scott Schwartz, and, with Larson's plotline deftly reworked by David Auburn, the production has a fetching modesty and reveals Larson's idiosyncrasy, energy, and promise. (7/9/01) (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

**TOPDOG/UNDERDOG**
In Suzan-Lori Parks's new play, two brothers who live together in a seedy room argue, comfort, and, as brothers will, provoke each other, with conse-

quences that can perhaps be predicted—their names are Lincoln and Booth. And they are as different from each other as a tortoise and a hare: as Lincoln, a former three-card-monte dealer who is trying to turn his life around, Jeffrey Wright exhibits both shame and slyness, while Don Cheadle, as the younger, excitable Booth, is full of "scheming and dreaming." They are, under the direction of George C. Wolfe, wonderful to watch, but Parks's play contains too much clunky, overwritten exposition, and it keeps letting the air out of its own tires. (8/6/01) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Sept. 2.)

## LONG RUNS

**AIDA**
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
**ANNIE GET YOUR GUN**
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.
**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.
**BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES**
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
**CABARET**
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
**CHICAGO**
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
**CONTACT**
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.
**DE LA GUARDA**
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.
**THE DINNER PARTY**
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. (Closes Sept. 1.)
**THE FANTASTICKS**
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.
**FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY**
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
**THE FULL MONTY**
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.
**KISS ME, KATE**
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
**THE LION KING**
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
**LES MISÉRABLES**
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
**THE MUSIC MAN**
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.
**PERFECT CRIME**
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
**THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY**
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200. (Closes Sept. 1.)
**PROOF**
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
**RENT**
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
**THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW**
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.
**STOMP**
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
**THE SYRINGA TREE**
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.
**THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE**
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
**TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING**
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
**THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES**
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

## DANCE

**"IMMERSION 1/DESCENT"**
The eleven-member Sens Production company, under the direction of the choreographer Noemie Lafrance, presents a site-specific work, on Staircase B of the Domestic Violence Court. The dancers perform on the landings, and above and below the audience, who descend the thirteen flights during the course of the program. (108 Leonard St. 924-0077. Aug. 29-Sept. 1 at 7, 7:45, and 8:30.)

## NIGHT LIFE
## CONCERTS

**MARTIN SEXTON**
After investing eight hundred dollars in himself a decade ago to cut his first album, this folk rocker from Syracuse (by way of Boston) joined the ranks of the major-label recording artists. On his most recent album, "Wonder Bar," he sings in a wistful baritone, telling the stories of lonely working men who like to live behind open venetian blinds. The songs are full of gritty details of the simple life (the album's title comes from the name of a Worcester, Massachusetts, pizza parlor where Sexton wrote most of the songs), and they are best heard in person. Sexton's emphatic live performances were what carried him from his low-budget early days right into the big leagues. (N.Y.C. Blues Cruise, Pier 16 at the South Street Seaport. For more information, call 560-2583. Aug. 30 at 7 and 9:30.)

**PJ HARVEY**
Polly Jean Harvey, the leader of this near-eponymous band, is a wee sprite from rural England who has been called the savior of rock and roll for most of the last decade. Finally, she seems willing to live up to the billing. On her latest album, "Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea," the thirty-two-year-old brunette (who moved to New York two years ago) cranks up the tempo and lets loose with the determined passion of a Manhattanite on the verge of a joyful weekend. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Sept. 4-5 at 8.)

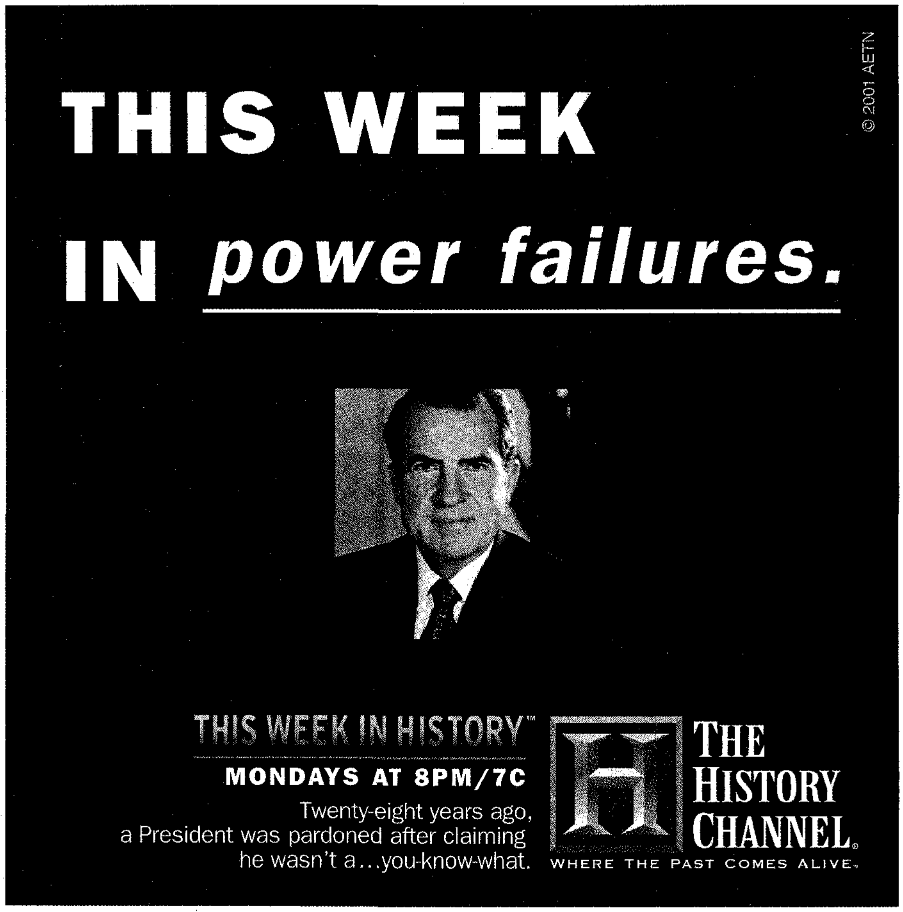
## CLUBS

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*

**B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL**
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Aug. 30-Sept. 1: The legendary **Etta James** celebrates the first anniversary of this Times Square night club. Discovered by Johnny Otis when she was just fifteen, the Los Angeles native (born Jamesetta Hawkins) cut her first record, "Roll with Me, Henry" (an answer to Hank Ballard's hit "Work with Me, Annie"), back in 1954. Through the following decades she saw good times (in the mid-sixties she recorded her classics "Tell Mama" and "I'd Rather Go Blind") and bad (a severe drug addiction in the seventies). In recent years, sober again, James has been as productive as ever: the last twelve months have seen a powerful roots-rock record, "Matriarch of the Blues," and a set of jazz standards, "Blue Gardenia." And onstage, she still delivers a sweaty and sexy performance that belies her age.

**BOWERY BALLROOM**
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Aug. 30: **Robert Walter's 20th Congress** brings some funky sounds to town. Walters, the former keyboardist for the Greyboy Allstars, tackles the Hammond organ, the Fender Rhodes, and the piano with the zeal of a street preacher. Backed by guitar, congas, and saxophone, Walters delivers a groovy party, along with a few surprises—he's been known to cover the Judas Priest hit "You've Got Another Thing Comin'."

**IRVING PLAZA**
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—**30 Odd Foot of Grunts** rolls into town Aug. 29. How can an Australian band without a major-label deal quickly sell out a night in the Big Apple? (The tickets disappeared the day they went on sale.) The short answer: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Russell Crowe. The long answer: Russell Crowe. The actor, who was making music long before he hit it big in Hollywood, has been drawing major crowds across the country (in Chicago the mostly female fans got in line at midday for evening shows) with his marquee looks and his surprisingly passable folk-inflected rock and roll. Sept. 4: **Jimmy Eat World** offers a more mature but no less compelling slice of post-punk than the pranksters in Blink 182, to whom they are often compared and who happen to be big fans (the band recently played the wedding of Blink's guitarist, Tom DeLonge). On its latest album, "Bleed American," this quartet from Mesa, Arizona, cranks out upbeat and highly polished songs that resonate with the raw emotion of earnest pop. ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

**JOE'S PUB**

425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Aug. 29: **Antibalas,** a fourteen-piece multiracial Afro-beat ensemble from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, which takes its musical and political inspiration from Fela Kuti. Its shows are a thunderous mass of rhythms, horns, and bass. Aug. 30-31: For those who don't belong to the cult of **Diamanda Galás,** her bilingual ululation suggests a woman alternately possessed by the spirits of Tina Turner, Yoko Ono, and an S & M dominatrix. Sept. 4: The young lead singer of **Antony and the Johnsons Orchestra** has a sweet and haunting voice reminiscent of Brian Ferry and a theatrical, pansexual stage presence that recalls early Marc Bolan.

*Etta James, celebrating the first anniversary of the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill.*

**KNITTING FACTORY**

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Aug. 29: **Le Tigre,** the band led by the former Bikini Kill front woman Kathleen Hanna, performs a benefit for Bluestockings, an independent women's bookstore on the Lower East Side. The riot-grrrl themes of Hanna's punk past remain intact, but with new musical colorings; Hanna's three-piece outfit mixes sampled drumbeats with early B-52's-style fuzz-box guitar riffs and classic sixties organ and synthesizer sounds.

**MARION'S CONTINENTAL RESTAURANT & LOUNGE**

354 Bowery, between 3rd and 4th Sts. (475-7621)—Through Labor Day this East Village night spot dispenses with its usual décor and becomes the Kahiki Lounge. Inspired by a now defunct sixties-era Columbus, Ohio, Polynesian restaurant, the lounge is outfitted with straw huts, bamboo stalks, and colorful paper lanterns. Order a mai tai and and a pupu platter and take a cheap trip to the South Seas.

**MAXWELL'S**

1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Aug. 30-31: Born from the ashes of the equally hushed Galaxie 500, Dean Wareham's **Luna** proves that you don't have to make a big noise to make a big splash. A longtime favorite of the Lower East Side music scene, Luna has built a substantial following based on their endearing, lo-fi music, which is full of nods to their downtown Manhattan forefathers, the Velvet Underground and Television.

**MERCURY LOUNGE**

217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Aug. 30: First-class jump blues, Western swing, and rockabilly with the Los Angeles sextet **Big Sandy and His Fly-Rite Boys.**

**S.O.B.'S**

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Aug. 30: A night of soca with **Byron Lee and the Dragonaires.** The Jamaican band that gave some local color to "Dr. No," James Bond's 1962 big-screen début, is still going strong, thanks in part to Lee's cool arrangements and his business savvy—he's the owner of Kingston's Dynamic Sounds studio, where the Rolling Stones, Paul Simon, and Eric Clapton have all laid down tracks.

**TONIC**

107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—The San Francisco quintet **Sleepytime Gorilla Museum** drops by Aug. 31. Formed from the remains of the now sadly defunct legendary Bay Area outfit Idiot Flesh, the band combines killer musicianship with some truly inspired bombast. Their wildly varied songs—pieces, really—range from manic orchestrations reminiscent of the composer Varèse to staid, haunting vocal melodies accompanied by eerie percussion instruments. Even more strange than the music are the ensemble's performances, which are imbued with the spirit of a joyous, and at times terrifying, anarcho-syndicalist union of performance artists. For their very first show, two years ago in an abandoned Oakland department store, the patrons were kept outside while the band played before an audience of one slug (the following night humans were allowed in). Expect the unexpected.

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

**ALGONQUIN HOTEL**

59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Sept. 1: Through sheer tenacity and the application of a vocal talent that has steadily ripened with the passing years, **Carol Sloane** has become one of the grandes dames of jazz singing. Her knowing interpretations of lyrics and sly phrasing should be closely studied by the new generation of chanteuses. Dining.

**BIRDLAND**

315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Aug. 30-Sept. 1: Try this for a parlor game: name two jazz artists of the past four decades that bassist **Buster Williams** hasn't played with. Good luck. The ubiquitous virtuoso will have the pianist **Mulgrew Miller,** the saxophonist **Steve Wilson,** and the drummer **Lenny White** on hand to help generate sparks. Sept. 2 and Sundays: Although the Maestro passed this year, the **Chico O' Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Big Band** is in good hands under the direction of his son, the energetic pianist **Arturo.** The senior O'Farrill was one of the rare artistic souls who, after being consigned to the storage room of history, found himself recognized in the winter of his life for massive achievements; the big band that he nurtured in the late nineties is fully primed to keep his legacy fresh for a new generation of Latin-jazz fans. Sept. 3 and Mondays: The **Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra.** How Akiyoshi has kept her big band going strong for thirty-plus years is nothing less than a triumph of the jazz spirit. A personal forum for its leader's skillful compositions, modernist arrangements, and fluid bop piano, the orchestra also has a guaranteed whirlwind of a soloist in Akiyoshi's husband, the tenor saxophonist and flutist **Lew Tabakin.** Dining.

**BLUE NOTE**

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Sept. 2: Spend a quarter century playing with all and sundry in the jazz community and you'll deserve a party too. Happily, some of the most illustrious names that the distinguished and dependable pianist **James Williams** has collaborated with will be out in force (on selected nights) to celebrate, including **Clark Terry, Jon Faddis, Tom Harrell, John Patitucci, Karrin Allyson,** and **Christian McBride.**

**CARLYLE HOTEL**

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pianist **Peter Mintun** is in charge at the Bemelmans Bar. A genuine throwback to a gentler time, this elegant performer specializes in curios from the twenties and thirties like "Kitten on the Keys," but he has also been known to play cartoon theme songs if the mood (or the crowd) warrants it. Agreeable and reassuring without being over-gracious, he's sort of a curio himself.

**IRIDIUM**

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 2: The **TS Monk** sextet. The drummer has gracefully established his own niche in the jazz

BLAIR DRAWSON

world outside his father Thelonious's shadow by leading a smart sextet that imaginatively investigates the jazz repertoire—even Dad's tunes get a tweaking—while keeping the playing field open for flashy soloists. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

**KNITTING FACTORY**
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 1-3: **Henry Threadgill's** latest band, Zooid, is your basic saxophone, oud, tuba, guitar, cello, and drums outfit. His new album, "Up Popped the Two Lips," confirms that this slinky, utterly distinctive, and disarmingly engaging unit is among the finest ensembles that this key composer-improviser has yet devised. Sept. 4: **Drew Gress,** a crackerjack new-jazz bassist and whip-smart composer, gathers together some old friends for a new band. Sin & Drift features the pianist **Uri Caine,** the saxophonist **Tim Berne,** and the other half of Drew's rhythmic heartbeat, the drummer **Tom Rainey.**

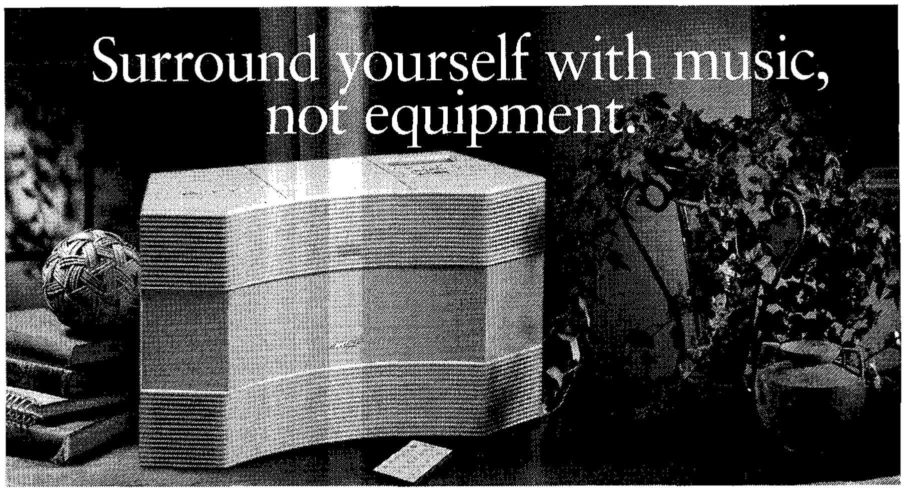
**SMOKE**
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—Aug. 30-Sept. 1: You can't miss **Dr. Lonnie Smith** in a club. He's the guy behind the Hammond organ wearing a turban. How he took his title and why he wears the headdress have never been established definitively, but when you play the keyboards with as much funk and fluency as this veteran—frequently heard as a member of the saxophonist Lou Donaldson's grooving unit—you have the right to indulge in a bit of self-mythologizing.

**UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ**
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Aug. 31-Sept. 1: Keeping his ear to the ground for new sounds and playing with such smart leaders as Tom Harrell and Andrew Hill has expanded the saxophonist **Greg Tardy's** horizons; following his rapid maturation can only reap rewards.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 2: All the talk over the past decades about minding the jazz tradition must have been quite a hoot to the alto saxophonist **Charles McPherson.** In the early sixties, when his peers were diving deep into avant-garde waters, this Detroit native was studiously reviving the bebop verities of Charlie Parker, even while playing with musical activists like Charles Mingus. Today, McPherson is a master himself, still keeping the bebop banner flying high. Acknowledging this is the trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis,** who is sitting in as a special guest soloist. Sparks will fly down Seventh Avenue South all week long. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

## ART
### MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930,"** which traces the careers of the four post-Impressionist painters, is the visual equivalent of a beach book. But it's more Jackie Collins than Tom Clancy. The imagery these artists preferred—cozy interiors, cavorting poodles, outings at the beach—looks far from radical today, but in fin-de-siècle France the infusion of art into everyday life was groundbreaking. Much of the work was commissioned for private homes; a pair of torchères designed by Lucien Levy-Dhurer flanking the entrance signals the decorative, domestic theme. (In a related but misguided strategy, the gallery walls are painted in murky period colors: oxblood and deep teal.) Of the four artists, Vuillard fares best. Though his compact, mosaiclike brushwork can cloy, in a painting like "Windows Overlooking the Woods," a sweeping view of the French countryside, it takes on the knotty magic of a tapestry. Through Sept. 9. ♦ Museumgoers en route to the new Jacques and Natasha Gelman galleries pass permanent displays of twentieth-century European painting, including a time line of Picassos (from the completely blue "Blind Man's Meal," from 1903, to the ebullient "Dreamer," from 1932, a lavender-bellied woman rolling in grass and flowers), Balthus's "The



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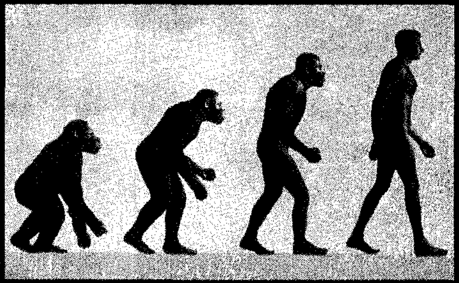
THIS WEEK
IN *generation gaps.*



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"Mountain," and Modigliani's portrait of Juan Gris. The Gelmans' recently bequeathed collection, which inaugurates the rechristened space, complements the ongoing exhibit: Picasso's small, simple 1906 self-portrait; Balthus's well-known, inner-thigh-and-underwear-baring "Therèse Dreaming"; and Juan Gris's "Juan Legua" each complete thoughts begun next door. The collectors' weakness for Surrealism is represented by a few noncanonical Dalis and some cheerful larks from Tanguy and Miró. Through Feb. 3. ♦ **"African, Oceanic, and Ancient American Art."** This smattering of recent acquisitions includes a vitrine of metal crosses from the Congo and a protective scroll from nineteenth-century Ethiopia. Several sets of photographs let viewers meet the ghosts of Africa past, in studio portraits from the twenties and sixties and in a memorable image of a mission outpost in Madagascar, its grounds teeming with people and the sky crowded with white-peaked buildings. Through Oct. 28. ♦ In summertime, the museum's roof is transformed into Met Hampton (a bikini-free zone). This year, the sun worshippers and singles who mob the roof on weekend evenings share their turf with five large sculptures by Joel Shapiro. Three are cast in bronze, two in aluminum (one painted fire-engine red and the other cobalt blue). All five employ a similar formal strategy: square and rectangular bars are joined together at apparently haphazard angles. The arrangements have a Constructivist flavor and, in the case of the colored sculptures, invite an anthropomorphic reading, with the bars legible as arms, trunks, and legs. But the most ambitious piece, which is twenty-four feet high and looks gravitationally impossible, resembles a tumbling game of pickup sticks. Through late fall. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—An antidote to Gehry fever, the first half of the Mies van der Rohe extravaganza has opened with "Mies in Berlin." Matching its subject's famous simplicity, the show is a calmly paced bildungsroman, tracing a thirty-year progression from Schinkelesque prodigy to modernist master. Understandably, the show's curators, Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll, worried that canonical projects like the Tugendhat House and the Barcelona Pavilion might seem too familiar. Their decision to freshen things up with Thomas Ruff's cloying colorized photographs is the show's only lapse. Otherwise, it's easy to fall under the spell of Mies's planar vision, his integration of landscape and garden design (more suited to a Californian than a Germanic climate), and his infectious love of *betonte Leere*, or heightened emptiness. A complementary show (at the Whitney) picks up where this one leaves off, with Mies's arrival in the United States in 1938. Through Sept. 11. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—For his first New York retrospective, Wayne Thiebaud's career has been served up in four courses, beginning with dessert. During his pastry period, Thiebaud turned cafeteria fare—not just wedges of cake and pie but a whole alphabet of prepared foods—into something enduringly wry and lovely, a celebration of everyday artifice. The stiff and studied portraits that follow are the show's weakest moment, but Thiebaud returns to form in the subsequent cityscapes and farmland scenes, creating steep, unapologetic Arcadias. There are echoes of Hopper, Diebenkorn, and Johns throughout, but none of Thiebaud's predecessors have his cool, confectionary jauntiness. Through Sept. 23. ♦ Picking up where MOMA's more engaging early-Mies exhibition leaves off, **"Mies in America"** looks at how the Master of Less and the Culture of More altered each other. Focussing on a few major commissions—among them the Lake Shore Drive Towers, in Chicago; the Seagram Building; and the Chicago Convention Hall—the exhibition offers a kind of dry immersion in Mies's immaterialist aesthetic. With acres of bland drawings and only a few models, this show isn't going to change many minds: skeptics will leave with a renewed conviction that Mies's buildings are three-dimensional graph paper. But the lucid wall texts, prepared by a curatorial team led by Phyllis Lambert (who first worked with Mies as the client for the Seagram Building), remind us that his simple effects depended upon a host of tweaked, ingenious details. Through Sept. 23. ♦ The Tower of Babel has nothing on the Whitney this month, as Joseph Grigely transforms the lobby gallery into a chapel of white noise. The artist became deaf at the age of ten, and conducts conversations with nonsigners through notes scribbled by them on scraps of paper. Grigely can speak, so we read only one side of the dialogue, ranging from a series of chitchat non sequiturs ("loud wind now" followed by "Wim Wenders, too") to emphatic declarations ("I want 10%"). More than twenty-five hundred of these scraps are installed floor to ceiling in the oval space, the visual equivalent of a drone. Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The Discovery Room, a hands-on educational program conceived in the museum's dark belly, has just moved into its new and permanent headquarters, a sunny, two-thousand-square-foot play space next door to the familiar big ceremonial canoe at the Seventy-seventh Street entrance. Inside the room, a replica of

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## TABLES FOR TWO

**TOWN**
15 W. 56th St. (582-4445)—The couple seated alone on the landing of a heavily trafficked stairway in this two-tiered establishment seemed perfectly thrilled to be there. After all, they had secured a table in a torridly fashionable restaurant that was packed, even on a Monday night in August. And they were sampling the food of Geoffrey Zakarian, a veteran of such high-profile playpens as the Royalton Hotel's 44 and Patroon who has come into his own in the dining room of the Chambers Hotel, a new, pocket-size dormitory catering to people who are likely to have wandered in from Norma Kamali's shop next door. Town, which was designed by the ubiquitous David Rockwell, looks like a nosh pit dreamed up by Busby Berkeley: the stairway sweeps into a glamorously backlit room with a twenty-four-foot-high ceiling, stalactites of crystal beads, and oceans of beige.

What the servers (crisply outfitted in Hugo Boss) deliver from the kitchen is a nouvelle-eclectic cuisine that makes "fusion" seem as dated as the atomic bomb. Starters include a sophisticated twist on the old split-pea soup (fresh peas and fried prosciutto in a chilled pea broth) and a risotto that goes where this Italian classic has never gone before (it's studded with escargots and black truffles). The main dishes include chicken roasted with rhubarb and accompanied by chanterelles and crushed parsnips; halibut poached with fennel and perked up by niçoise olives and a tomato fondue; veal tongue, cooked Basque-style, with roasted artichokes and radishes; and a pot of mussels, laced with kaffir lime and sweet garlic, which more than delivers on its aromatic promise. Town's dessert list is equally adventurous: a basket of sugary beignets spurting molten chocolate arrives, followed by a frozen *café brûlot*, spiked with rum and Grand Marnier; a grapefruit gratin gets a kick from a scoop of ginseng sorbet. Among elaborations on the traditional cheese course, the best is an aged Gouda, joined to an apple-and-maple strudel. (Open weekdays for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, weekends for dinner only. Entrées $19-$32.)

—*Charles Michener*

an African baobab tree spreads its branches over displays about the scientists and artists who studied and re-created it, and a working dinosaur dig busies young paleontologists. There's a surprisingly wide variety of specimens for little kids to hold and shake and investigate, including an outsized dinosaur toe bone, a mastodon tusk, and, resting in a shredded-paper nest, in Drawer 52 of a brand-new child-sized specimen cabinet, one emu egg, now broken. The management describes the accident as a learning experience. ♦ **"The Genomic Revolution"** is as stagy as the museum's permanent wildlife dioramas and as wired as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Throughout the dark, labyrinthine exhibit, sound bites from scientists and Everymen overlap with a soundtrack of doubt-fostering minor-key hums and beeps. The tone tends toward boosterish enthusiasm for progress, with an occasional raised eyebrow; pronouncements like "Our perception of medicine and ourselves is forever changed" are spoken within hearing range of explanations of why it might be unwise to clone Rex or Muffin. (For one thing, two calico cats with the same genes would be unlikely to have the same pattern of spots.) Touch-screen surveys tabulate visitors' responses to controversial questions, and the museumgoers prove much more enthusiastic about genetic technologies than respondents in a recent national sample—at last count, thirty per cent of the visitors would replicate a person. Through Jan. 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Like the Whitney's recent foray into computer-aided artmaking, **"Digital Printmaking Now"** is best enjoyed by turning your expectations way down. Much of what's on view—manipulated photographs or drawings by established names like Donald Sultan, Chuck Close, and Carroll Dunham—uses technology only incidentally. The rest veers toward jokey surrealist photo-collage: flying turtles, lemons with nipples, a plate of ink-jet cookies. Strangely, it's the most decorative works that use the new technology best. Some of these—especially the lovely, intricate wallpaperish patterns designed by Carl Fudge and Miriam Dym—might have impressed even that arch-technophobe, William Morris. Through Sept. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

### AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM

40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—**"Origamic Architecture."** Each diminutive Chrysler Building, Notre Dame, and Guggenheim in this mind-boggling show of pop-up architecture started life as a single sheet of paper. The hybrid art form was inaugurated twenty years ago by the Tokyo professor Masahiro Chatani, who took on the ancient Japanese art of paper-folding with a pair of scissors. Anyone who ever labored over snowflake cutouts in grade school will find it hard to believe the miniature miracles here. Through Sept. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

### COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—**"Rooms with a View"** surveys the history of landscape wallpapers, from Belle Époque vignettes of cozy ruins to the magnificent three-hundred-and-sixty-degree panoramas of the middle of the nineteenth century. Three superb examples of the latter occupy rooms of their own. It's hard to say which is the loveliest, but the exquisite craftsmanship of Zuber and Cie's 1849 "El Dorado" or Dufour's 1825 "Vues d'Italie" (thirty-three panels printed in seven shades of ochre!) make the subsequent sampling of quasi-abstract twentieth-century designs seem almost insultingly meagre. Through Oct. 14. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

### DAHESH MUSEUM

601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—In the nineteenth century, classical subject matter was all the rage in academic art, as this show of works from the museum's collection illustrates. It opens with a series of paintings of Greek and Roman statuary, including Jean-Léon Gérôme's "Michelangelo," which portrays the master as an aged blind man being guided to the Belvedere torso (a highly prized fragment of ancient art) by a slender youth in candy-striped leggings—a painting that seems very forward-looking in its homoeroticism. But the show's centerpiece is a virtuosic and deeply disturbing painting by Jaroslav Čermák, first displayed in the Paris Salon of 1861. A naked Herzegovenian woman is being ravished by Turkish infidels as her husband and infant lie dead at her feet. The contemporary reverberations are chilling. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

### ISAMU NOGUCHI GARDEN MUSEUM

32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is the core medium. The names alone (jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine) are sensuous, and the stone sculptures rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art—relics of a civilization. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

### JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—**"Marc Chagall: Early Works from Russian Collections,"** devoted to the years prior to the artist's permanent emigration from Russia, in 1922, is something of a bumpy ride until its dazzling finale. It opens with a selection of workmanlike canvases by Chagall's first teacher, Yehuda Pen, who legitimized the theme of Jewish life as a subject for his pupil. More than fifty paintings and drawings by Chagall, all borrowed from Russian institutions, offer moments of reverie (a pair of lovers aloft over a grisaille village) and angst (war-weary soldiers tersely rendered in pen and ink). But the group of seven murals commissioned by a theatre in Moscow (one sports the artist's emblematic and ever-popular fiddler on the roof) steals the show. Through Oct. 14. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

### MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—**"Dressing for a New York City Childhood."** The photographs that line the entry to this collection of period clothing and accessories introduce viewers both to the children who wore the outfits and, in a Jacob Riis image of a sweatshop, the children who made them. Oil portraits and cartes de visite show well-dressed children of the Gilded Age, including the colorful siblings Gifford and Rosamond Pinchot and a young man who grew up to give a gold mine to Trinity Church. In the vitrines, tot-size torture devices (such as tiny clogs, corsets, and hoops) are accompanied by a nearly up-to-date school uniform, in tracksuit-like fleece, and a double-breasted Bar Mitzvah suit, once worn by the donor's son, David Kaley, who, at twice that age now, might have imagined he'd outgrown the embarrassment. Through Sept. 16. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

### NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—Red Grooms, the artist who put the Pop in pop-up, gets a mini-retrospective of his prints on the museum's fourth floor. Best known for the elaborate, life-size constructions that he calls "sculpto-pictoramas," Grooms has been experimenting with lithography since 1956, at the same time that he was frolicking in happenings with the likes of Allan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg. Over one hundred works on paper are on view, including the winningly titled "Aarrrrrrhh"; a fire engine with a 3-D ladder, from 1971; and the artist's own wedding invitation, from 1987. Through Nov. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5, and Fridays, 10 to 6.)

### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—The clothes on exhibit in **"The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts"** put the understated military decoration of Manifest Des-

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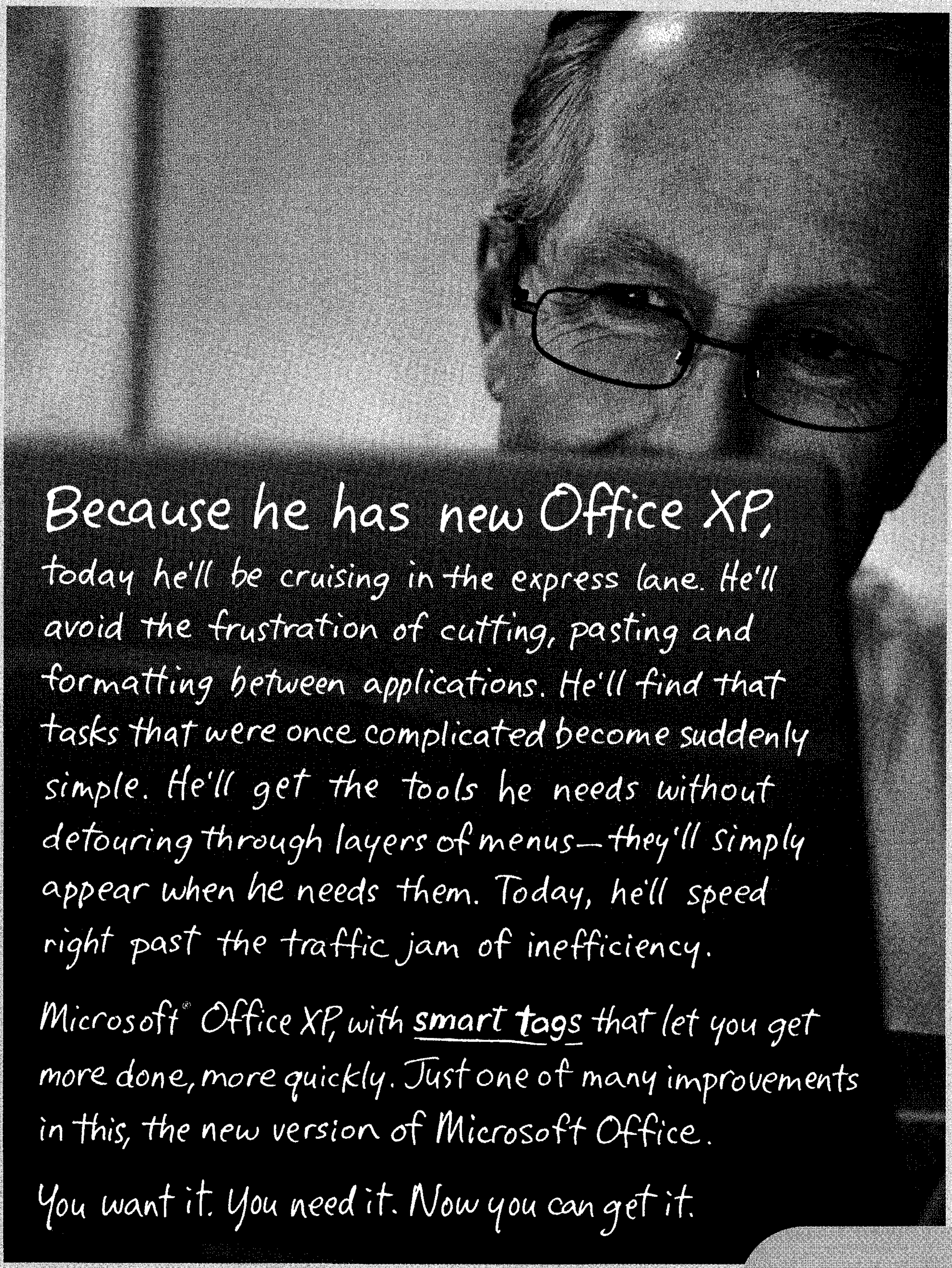

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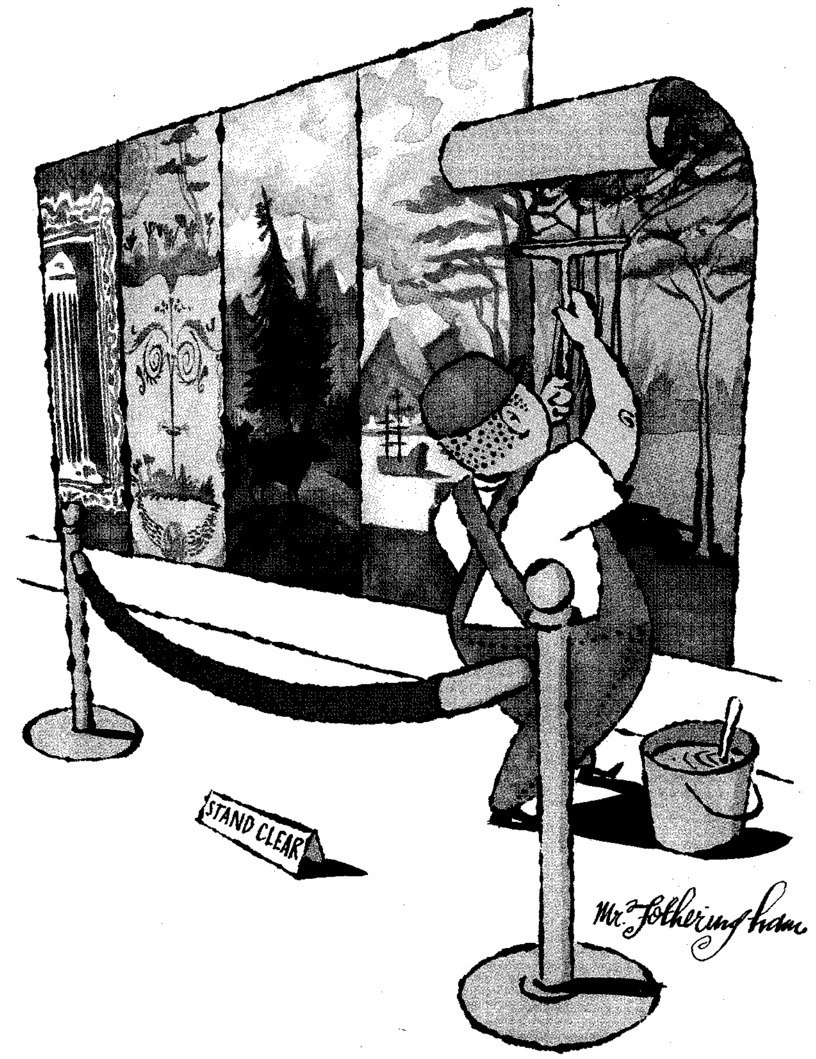

*"Rooms with a View: Landscape & Wallpaper," at the Cooper-Hewitt.*

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

tiny—epaulets and glorified tie tacks—to shame. Their shining glass beads, porcupine quills, bone, hair, fur, paint, and sinew often obscure the hide or cloth they are embellishing, and, in some, further elaborate fringe hangs well below the hem. One 1885 Lakota cloak represents its wearer's glory literally, with pictographs of gunmen in shirts and pants falling to gunmen in loincloths; a 2000 Montana Blackfoot jacket gets the same effect with text: "Heart Butte Warriors 26-0 State Class 'C' Champions '2000.' " Through Nov. 4. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

**NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**
583 Broadway (219-1222)—The first American retrospective for William Kentridge, a South African artist best known for poetic animated films based on his own charcoal drawings. While these oblique chronicles, which include the occasional angry mob and tortured prisoner, do depict the strife of apartheid, Kentridge is a humanist, not an activist. The imagery in his films unfurls with the illogical clarity of a dream: faucets become birds, heads become bowls, and handkerchiefs weep, flooding the floor. Even the most politically explicit film, "Ubu and the Truth Commission," stars a nineteenth-century cartoon character (Ubu, conceived by Alfred Jarry). The show includes eleven films, more than sixty drawings, videotapes of the artist's theatrical projects, and two recent installations that combine film projections with mirrored objects. Through Sept. 16. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

**NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—Text-based shows too often try one's patience, but **"Independence and Its Enemies in New York"** is unexpectedly stirring. Organized to mark the two-hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the show brings to life the events of that fateful summer of '76. In Manhattan, the Declaration was read aloud on the afternoon of July 9. Almost immediately, a crowd of "bad subjects and bad citizens" marched down to Bowling Green to vandalize an equestrian statue of George III. A few fragments of the statue are on view. The rest of it was melted down to make bullets (forty-two thousand of them). As a result, one patriotic wag noted that British troops had "Melted Majesty fired at them." Through Sept. 9. ♦ On a lighter note, a show called **"Advertising Drama"** offers a selection of theatrical posters printed in the first decade of the twentieth century. Most memorialize largely forgotten melodramas like "Floradora" and "The Boy with the Boodle." The crisp, beautifully designed images show European aristocrats and other undesirables cowering before plucky Yankees who say things like "You've compromised my sweetheart's reputation and you must give me satisfaction!" Through Sept. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

**P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER**
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Buzz Club: News from Japan."** Part of the first floor here has been converted into a seventy-foot-long beehive, which explains the "buzz" in the show's title. Lilliputian installations by Japanese artists and designers are crammed into hexagonal cubbyholes like commuters on a rush-hour train. Technology dominates, as customized cell phones (heavy on Hello Kitty-style cuteness) join the requisite Web projects, music videos, and *anime* cartoons. Viewers are invited to crawl into some of the mini-galleries, but only the extremely young at heart or slender of hip are likely to be tempted. Through Sept. 30. ♦ Carla Accardi's pioneering

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"Triplice Tenda" (1969), in clear plastic and pale-pink paint, is obviously art—it's not practical enough to be anything else. Elsewhere, constructions—of aluminum tubing, nylon canvas, netting, and zipper—take the shapes of major Cuban landmarks, such as the capitol building and the Morro lighthouse in Havana, and look professionally sewn, even watertight. A Martha Stewart of the *Revolución* might serve dinner in the one with the vaulted ceiling. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

**STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM**
144 W. 125th St. (864-4500)—**"For the Record"** brings the studio into the museum with work from three young artists-in-residence, Julie Mehretu, Senam Okudzeto, and Nadine Robinson. The loudest work is Robinson's: a shag canvas of human hair, coupled with a wall of speakers playing snippets on a mass of turntables. Mehretu and Okudzeto offer more traditional drawings and paintings. Okudzeto's inky silhouettes seem equally influenced by Kara Walker's cutouts, Chris Offili's Afro inkblots, and the opening credits of a James Bond movie. Through Sept. 16. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 6; Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

*Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.*

**LOUISE BOURGEOIS**
How do you follow Jeff Koons's blooming puppy dog in Rockefeller Plaza? Bourgeois counters last summer's vision of majestic adorableness with a trio of toweringly sinister daddy longlegs—they look like they escaped from a 1950 Japanese horror film. The largest is a spindly thirty-four feet tall, with coursing, craggy bronze sinews: standing under the duomo of her eight legs, you can look up and up at the surrounding skyscrapers, which seem closer—just a few steps away!—and so easy to clamber up and conquer. Through Sept. 4.

**RICHARD SERRA / TOM WESSELMAN**
It's hard to imagine two artists whose works have less to say to each other: Serra, whose steel monuments have a nearly puritanical solemnity, and Wesselman, the most libidinous of Pop hedonists. Here, though, an accidental connection emerges. Serra's lithographs of inky ellipses resemble the smoke rings that drift from the mouths of Wesselman's svelte nudes. Think of it as Cotton Mather and Hugh Hefner sharing a cigarette. Both shows through Sept. 7. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

**DON VAN VLIET**
Back when he was known as Captain Beefheart, Van Vliet seemed unassailably weird. As a painter, though, the odd thing about Van Vliet is how honorable and categorizable his work feels. In this sampling of paintings from the eighties, the brashly colored nudes, deer, and monkeys have clearly floated in from the German Expressionist sector of the collective unconscious. They look great—full of coarse impasto and charm—but never quite unfamiliar. Through Sept. 8. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

**"THE FRAGILE DEWDROP"**
This show, which borrows its sappy title from a line of Keats, spans nearly two hundred years of American genre art and touches on nearly as many subjects, from farmers and hunters to diners and shoppers. Whether domestic (a plaster study of a mother and child, by Bessie Potter Vonnoh) or exotic (Frits Thaulow's painting of Venice, from 1885, before travel to Europe was tantamount to a trip to the mall), the work here tends toward the sentimental. The sole photograph—a lush photogravure of a New York construction scene by Alfred Stieglitz—lends some welcome grit. Through Sept. 21. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810.)

**"MODELS OF OBSERVATION: FLOWERS, FISHES, BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES"**
This time traveller of a show combines three Dutch still-life paintings from the seventeenth century with the work of three wildly disparate American artists: Milton Avery, Nancy Graves, and Donald Sultan. The Old Masters meet "This Old House" in Sultan's flock of birds made with floor tiles and tar in lieu of canvas and paint. Avery's winsome paintings are an antidote to the brooding Sultan; they're art's equivalent of an endless summer day. In Graves's bronze sculpture "Pilot," a botanical behemoth hunkers menacingly on the gallery floor like a still-life on steroids. Through Sept. 29. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

**ALFREDO GONZÁLEZ ROSTGAARD**
Back in Castro's salad days, the Cuban native Rostgaard complained that the political posters all looked the same: "A worker raising a left, powerful arm, with a small head." He imported the language of contemporary advertising—liquid, stylized shapes and whorls of bright, solid color—to revive them, and a classic Cuban time warp has preserved the style since. His most familiar subjects are Che Guevara and Angela Davis, both of whom wear halos. Richard Nixon makes an appearance, in lurid Technicolor, with fangs. Through Sept. 1. (Cuban Art Space, 124 W. 23rd St. 242-0559.)

**"LARGER THAN LIFE"**
Like an old men's bar, this group show includes some charismatic veterans and some genteel duffers. In the latter category there is Aristodimos Kaldis, an eminently likable sort of Greek Chagall. But the spotlight belongs to Paul Georges and Leland Bell, two very different éminences grises of the New York School. Georges is the Dionysian one: the electric lime-green squiggles of his "Calla Lillies" are gleefully blinding. Bell is the Apollonian control freak, turning domestic crises into a form of stylized theatre. Among the works on view is his last and possibly weirdest painting, in which the artist and his wife and daughter respond with calm horror to what seems to be a speaking pigeon. Through Sept. 28. (Center for Figurative Painting, 115 W. 30th St. 868-3452.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**LEON GOLUB**
A consolation prize for borough-challenged viewers who missed the recent retrospective of this scrappy painter-cum-activist at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. In lieu of fifty years' worth of work, this concise show zeros in on just five, from 1994 to 1999. The work remains raw in both subject and form, with paintings rendered on unstretched linen and tacked to the wall like banners. Golub's trademark feral dogs and battered bodies are still in evidence, but the strident savagery of his earlier pictures—explicit protests against American involvement in Vietnam and Central America—is not. Mortality may have replaced brutality as the artist's muse. Through Sept. 15. (Cooper Union, E. 8th St. at Third Ave. 353-4155.)

**LARRY KAGAN**
Kagan's wire sculptures look like run-of-the-mill modernist abstractions, but they're as satisfying as party tricks. The trick is that each bramble of arcs and zigzags casts a linear shadow on the wall which amounts to a drawing—of, for example, a cylinder, cube, grid, or beach chair. At their best, when form and effect seem perfectly incongruous, these paintings will make even the most affectless viewers feel a prickle of delight. Through Sept. 3. (Goldstrom, 560 Broadway. 941-9175.)

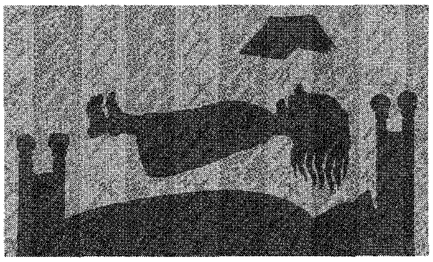
## GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

**"RENEWAL/CHANGE"**
Empire Fulton Ferry State Park, a spit of land between the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, is far less remote than it was this time last year. The increasingly residential surrounding neighborhood has gained a grocery store, a hardware store, a dry cleaner, a café, and at least one restaurant, and this outdoor sculpture show is surrounded by noisy, am-

## BOOK CURRENTS

### *The Devil Inside*

In the years since William Friedkin's 1973 horror extravaganza, "The Exorcist"—which was rereleased with considerable fanfare last year—the archaic rite of casting out demons has become more popular than ever. So argues the Fordham professor Michael Cuneo in his **AMERICAN EXORCISM** (Doubleday), a recently published history of the contemporary resurgence of



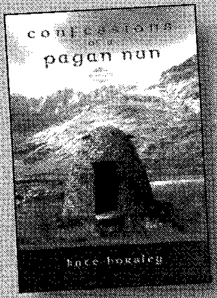
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

exorcism and belief in demonic possession. Cuneo sat in on dozens of exorcisms, finding that these days the controversial procedure (typically scorned by Catholic officials) runs the gamut from Linda Blair-style "puke-and-rebuke sessions" to mellow suburban affairs attended by hot chocolate, cookies, and potato chips.

Then there are modern evangelicals like Doris M. Wagner, who, in **HOW TO CAST OUT DEMONS: A GUIDE TO THE BASICS** (Gospel Light), asks, "How in the world did a little old grandma ever get involved in such yucky stuff?" Wagner, in homespun prose, relates her front-line encounters in "deliverance ministry," arguing that permissiveness invites evil, that "hereditary spirits" can operate like demonological DNA, and that adopted children, bigots, Mormons, rap-music fans, and yoga practitioners are at significant risk of possession.

Of course, America's possession obsession really goes back to 1692, when twenty men and women suspected of witchery were killed in Salem, Massachusetts. **THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS READER** (Da Capo), compiled by Frances Hill, gathers commentaries by such luminaries as Increase Mather, Arthur Miller, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose great-great-grandfather was involved in the witch-hunt. Hill's compendium reminds us that sometimes those driven to cast out demons are the ones who are truly possessed.

—*Mark Rozzo*



DRUID

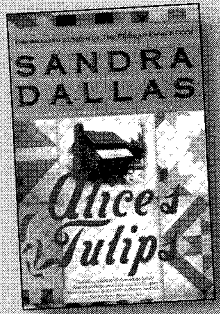
An Irish woman struggles between the Druidic ways of her childhood and the rising tide of Christianity that sweeps her into the local convent. Her obsession with writing her thoughts and her headstrong nature lead to accusations that she consorts with demons.

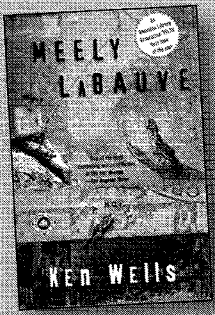
***CONFESSIONS OF A PAGAN NUN***
**by Kate Horsley**
Pub. Price: $19.95
Our Price: $15.96
**Readers' Advantage Price: $14.36**

DISPATCHES

Alice Bullock is left behind on her Iowa farm when her husband goes off to fight the Civil War. Equally talented at quilting and gossip, she fills letters to her sister with compelling accounts of her war-torn life, including quilting bees, farm life and even murder.

***ALICE'S TULIPS***
**by Sandra Dallas**
Pub. Price: $12.95
Our Price: $10.36
**Readers' Advantage Price: $9.32**





DISCOVER TITLE

DIXIE

Part Huck Finn, part Oliver Twist, fifteen-year-old Meely LaBauve is growing up on the Catahoula Bayou; dealing with an often absentee alligator hunter father and a colorful nemesis in the form of the bayou bully, Junior Guidry.

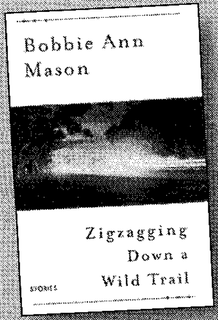
***MEELY LABAUVE***
**by Ken Wells**
Pub. Price: $11.95
Our Price: $9.56
**Readers' Advantage Price: $8.60**

DESTITUTE

One-legged Junior Guidry passes the time in a trailer in a snake-infested swamp. Having blown the settlement from his oil rig accident, he sees little beyond the next drink, until a mysterious woman with a bounty on her head enters his life and changes everything.

***JUNIOR'S LEG***
**by Ken Wells**
Pub. Price: $23.95
Our Price: $19.16
**Readers' Advantage Price: $17.24**

KEN WELLS
JUNIOR'S LEG



DEPARTURES

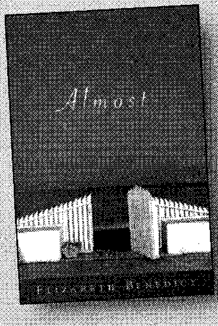
More than ever before, everyday Americans are going places these days. This collection of stories chronicles the experiences of unforgettable characters journeying out into the wide world and rediscovering the charms of home along the way.

***ZIGZAGGING DOWN A WILD TRAIL***
**by Bobbie Ann Mason**
Pub. Price: $22.95
Our Price: $18.36
**Readers' Advantage Price: $16.52**

DIVORCE

Just when she thought her divorce was about to be complete, Sophy Chase learns that her almost-ex has died mysteriously. She returns to the Massachusetts island to bury him and ends up confronting past, present and future.

***ALMOST***
**by Elizabeth Benedict**
Pub. Price: $24.00
Our Price: $19.20
**Readers' Advantage Price: $17.28**



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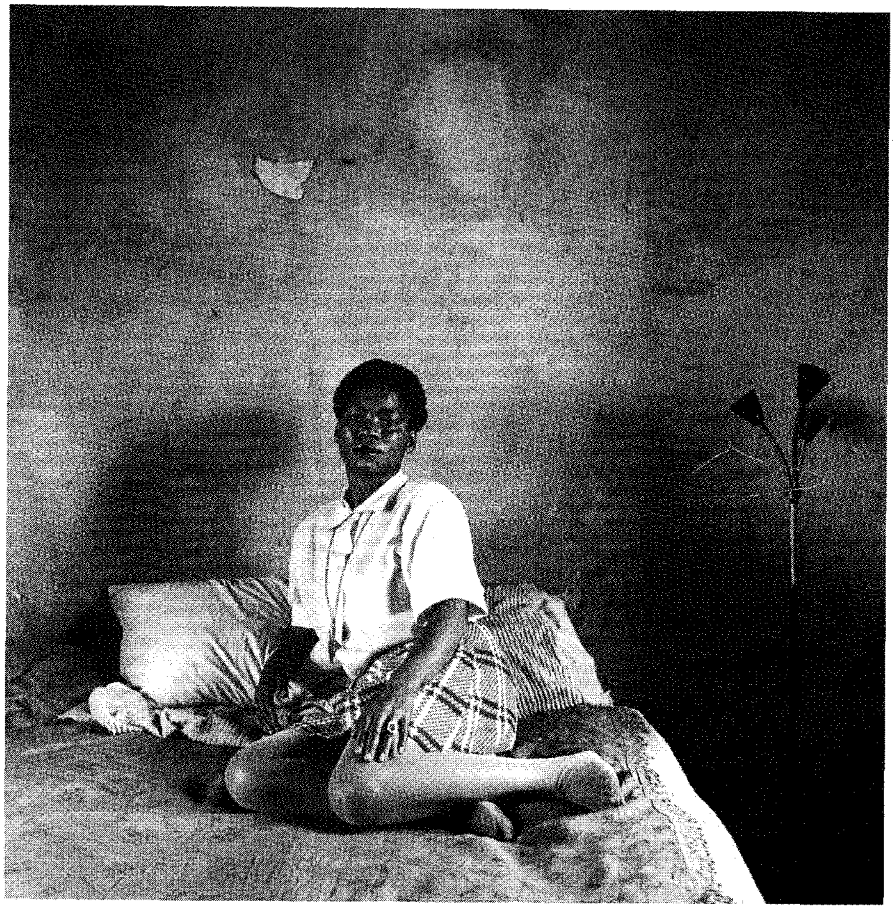

*David Goldblatt's portrait of Mrs. Miriam Diale at home in Soweto, at AXA.*

bitious construction on all sides. The show placidly offers tribute to nature nonetheless, with Howard Kalish's knee-high, sporelike sculpture, "Child," Richard Brachman's big, bastardized buckyball "Helio," and Ursula Clark's human-sized cocoon, which swings loosely from a branch, its twiggy bottom tracing circles on the ground. Nearby, a circle of pastel-colored mushrooms sprouting up beneath a small fruit tree are turning from papier-mâché to dust. Through Sept. 3. For information, call 718-802-9254.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

**MEREDITH ALLEN**
This "portrait gallery of cartoon icons" is actually a series of point-and-shoot photographs of animated-character-shaped novelty Popsicles. The exhibit's nine images—including "Roger's Beach (Tweety)" and "Moriches Island Road (Bugs)"—plumb a single conceit: the artist's disembodied hand holds a melting ice-cream bar against a pastoral backdrop. The prints glisten in appropriately psychedelic Technicolor, and the show feels like a trip to Coney Island gone awry, replete with sticky fingers and fun-house distortion. Through Aug. 31. (Gracie Mansion, 504 W. 22nd St. 645-7656.)

**DAVID GOLDBLATT**
Goldblatt, whose grandparents moved from Lithuania to South Africa in the eighteen-nineties, grew up outside Johannesburg. He describes his work as recording "states of being that lead to events . . . the conditions of society rather than the climactic outcomes of those conditions." This Farm Security Administration style was ideal for the everyday discontent of apartheid. While Goldblatt does, in one case, show the aftermath of an encounter with the security police (matching casts on both of fifteen-year-old Lawrence Matjee's arms), the violence is just as present in an embossed metal armband identifying the "Boss Boy" of the Randfontein Estates Gold Mine and in the faces of black commuters, buying tickets for enforced travel to relocated homes. Through Oct. 6. (AXA Gallery, 787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. 554-4818.)

**MIGUEL MORALES**
The transparencies of divers underwater which cover the gallery's windows may be the first thing viewers notice, but most of Morales's photographs of young men jumping from Acapulco cliffs are reserved and reportage-like. The best of them capture their subjects midair, arms outstretched in a surrender to gravity which recalls the Christian surrender to martyrdom. Through Sept. 21. (Mexican Cultural Institute, 27 E. 39th St. 217-6422.)

**ANDRÉ VILLERS**
When Villers and Picasso met in 1953, the painter was seventy-two and the photographer twenty-three. Over the next twenty years they created a record of Picasso's later life which has since come to look very familiar: bald, mischievous Picasso painting, posing, and flirting with the camera. This selection focusses, if anything, on the master in his underwear, particularly in white boxer shorts, buttoned in front, with one patterned pair mixed in for variety. In one jocularly intimate series, he puts on a pointed straw hat (the caption calls him Tonkinese); wears false glasses and facial hair in homage to Popeye; and ventures a cowboy hat, à la Gary Cooper—all while two fully dressed gentlemen look on from the next room. Through Sept. 6. (French Institute Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. 355-6100.)

**"THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS"**
This group show of New York School photographers, including Lisette Model, Louis Faurer, David Vestal, and Weegee, encompasses the influential generation before them, including Alfred Stieglitz, Walker Evans, Paul Strand, and Berenice Abbott, and the one after them, including Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander, Diane Arbus, and Charles Pratt. The city is depicted as an unending photo opportunity: Ellen Auerbach captures Renate Schottelius in mid-leap, dancing on a rooftop, and Evans works the subways with a hidden camera. By day, Winogrand photographs a Central Park peace demonstration; by night, he uncovers after-hours fondling at the Metropolitan Museum's Centennial Ball. Through Aug. 31. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 24th St. 989-7600.)

**"NO BIG PICTURES"**
In response to the recent bigger-is-better trend toward mural-size prints, the gallery fills its two small spaces with a roundup of small images, many from its archives. Unique maquettes from Vito Acconci, Chuck Close, and Joel-Peter Witkin are mixed in with vintage prints by Jacques Henri Lartigue, André Kertész, and Paul Outerbridge. Four color Polaroids by Philip-Lorca diCorcia are framed together to force an oblique narrative, and Robert Frank offers a single contact sheet packed with his greatest hits of 1955-56, some of which eventually made it into his seminal book "The Americans." Through Aug. 31. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

**INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY**
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (860-1777)—Sebastião Salgado's **"Migrations: Humanity in Transition."** Over the past seven years, Salgado has visited more than thirty-five countries, travelling with and photographing some of the nearly a hundred million migrants now wandering the planet. Viewers who follow international news may be familiar not only with the trouble spots he's been to—Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia among them—but also with these images, some of which have appeared in major American news magazines. Nevertheless, the effect of seeing them, particularly the sweeping landscapes, as immaculate black-and-white prints filling these large, open galleries remains powerful. Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

### *Short List*

**ESTHER BUBLEY**
PaineWebber, 1285 Sixth Ave., at 51st St. 713-2885. Through Sept. 7.

**AARON SISKIND**
Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through Aug. 31.

**"ANCIENT SITES OF THE AMERICAS"**
Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through Sept. 19.

**"SHIFTING TIDES: CUBAN PHOTOGRAPHY AFTER THE REVOLUTION"**
Grey, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780. Through Oct. 27.

## CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS AROUND TOWN

**ELLY AMELING MASTER CLASSES**
Ameling, the leading Dutch soprano of the late twentieth century, gave her farewell tour in 1995 but has remained active as a teacher of young singers. One of the few vocal artists who concentrate almost exclusively on art-song and oratorio work, she doubtless has much to tell: her many recordings of lieder and of *mélodies* are eloquent evidence of both her fresh, youthful voice and of her unusually perceptive interpretations. In the last two of a series of master classes, she shares her wisdom with the students of the Mannes School of Music, who will perform for the public; the artistic director of the series is the pianist Brian Zeger. (150 W. 85th St. 580-0210. Aug. 30 at 1 and 7. **Note:** The critic David Hamilton offers a lecture, "Brahms's Recorded Legacy," on Aug. 29 at 5:15.)

**MUSICAL OBSERVATIONS 2001**
The pianist Artur Schnabel (1882-1951) won renown for his magisterial interpretations of the music of Schubert and Beethoven, but his own compositions—which span the period between Reger and early Carter—have been largely ignored. The violinist and conductor Paul Zukofsky (with the assistance of the cellist Joel Krosnick and the composer Milton Babbitt) tries to redress the balance by coaching several advanced students in four Schnabel works, including the "Notturno" and the Piano Trio; the Landon Gallery hosts this concert. Aug. 30 at 8. (1926 Broadway, between 64th and 65th Sts. For more information, call 718-461-5071. No tickets are necessary, but reservations are required.)

**BARGEMUSIC**
String quintets by Brahms and Mozart are the fare for the floating chamber-music festival's Labor Day-weekend concerts. Some quintets (like Schubert's) add an extra cello to the standard string-quartet format, but these pieces add an extra viola, giving the ensemble a richer, more romantic tone. Aug. 30-31 at 7:30: The violinists Martin Beaver and James Ehnes, the violists Cynthia Phelps and Paul Coletti, and the cellist Ronald Thomas gather for two autumnal masterpieces, Mozart's Quintet in G Minor, K. 516, and Brahms's Quintet in F Major, Op. 88. ♦ Sept. 1 at 7:30 and Sept. 2 at 4: The same crew returns for a brighter program, Brahms's Quintet in G Major, Op. 111 (a carnival of Viennese dance styles), and Mozart's Quintet in D Major, K. 593. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

**SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND**
Franck's Piano Quintet in F Minor, a turbulent and deeply felt example of French *Wagnerisme*, is the highlight of the latest midday program held at the charming Le Refuge Inn; the pianist is Sara Davis Buechner. (620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 914-664-6934. Sept. 2 at 12:30.)

**JUILLIARD ARTISTS IN CONCERT**
The duo pianists Adelaide and Edgar Roberts perform music by Mozart, Hummel, and Mendelssohn (the Variations in B-Flat Major, Op. 83a), in a free concert in the Continental Center atrium, near the South Street Seaport. (180 Maiden Lane, at Front St. Sept. 4 at 12:30. No tickets necessary.)

**EUGENE ALBULESCU**
The Romanian pianist-composer presents "Pictures at a Concert," six original pieces inspired by paintings by the artist Mariana Ioanitescu (reproductions will be displayed at the concert). Liszt's Piano Sonata completes the program. (Bargemusic, Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-724-2693. Sept. 4 at 7. )

## OUT OF TOWN

**TANGLEWOOD**
With the summer's classical concerts done, Boston's musical duchy turns its energies to a three-day jazz festival. Aug. 31 at 8: The hat-clad flugelhorn and trumpet player Chuck Mangione, whose easy-on-the-ears pop hit "Feels So Good" became the official background music for the late nineteen-seventies, is still pouring on the pretty tunes. He shares the stage at Ozawa Hall with the swinging New York Voices, who make their Tanglewood début. ♦ Sept. 1 at 1:30: Jane Monheit, the sultry Long Island songstress, and the John Pizzarelli Trio play Ozawa Hall. ♦ Sept. 1 at 7: The scene moves to the Shed for a grander evening lineup, featuring the legendary vocalist Nancy Wilson (with the big band Diva), Spyro Gyra, and Ahmad Jamal. ♦ Sept. 2 at 1:30: The commanding tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins returns to Tanglewood for a concert at Ozawa Hall. ♦ Sept. 2 at 7: The festival closes with another Shed spectacular, featuring George Benson, Poncho Sanchez, Nicholas Payton, and the Louis Armstrong Centennial Celebration Band. (Lenox, Mass. 617-266-1200.)

**MUSIC MOUNTAIN**
Ruth Laredo, an elegant exponent of the Romantic piano repertory, joins the Shanghai String Quartet for a pair of concerts. Sept. 1 at 8: Schubert's Quartet in D Minor ("Death and the Maiden") and Schumann's Piano Quintet. ♦ Sept. 2 at 3: Czech music by Smetana (the first of the passionately confessional "From My Life" quartets) and Dvořák (the engagingly rustic Piano Quintet) shares the program with a work by Yiwen Jiang (the Shanghai's second violinist), a set of quartet arrangements of three traditional Chinese songs. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. These are the final performances of the season.)

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

**READINGS**
Aug. 30 at 7:30: By Ovidio Diaz Espino, from his book "How Wall Street Created a Nation: J. P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Panama Canal." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 4 at 7:30: By Rick Bragg, from "Ava's Man," an account of his maternal grandfather's life in the working-class South in the early twentieth century. (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.)

**WALKS AND TOURS**
Sept. 1 at 9: The bicycle-advocacy group Time's Up! organizes a moonlight ride through Brooklyn's Prospect Park. (For more information, call 802-8222.) ♦ Sept. 3 at 1: Big Onion Walking Tours takes a Labor Day walk through lower Manhattan, with stops at the location of the first Labor Day parade, in 1882, the site of the founding of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and the former Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. (For more information, call 439-1090.) ♦ Sept. 3 at 2: Bernie Cohen, of Bernie's New York walking tours, leads a stroll past the Sephardic cemeteries and the former speakeasies of Greenwich Village. (For more information, call 718-655-1883.)

## CLASSICAL NOTES

**STRUNG OUT**
Since the classical guitar lacks a place in the symphony orchestra, its rare appearances in solo concertos always seem exotic. The guitarist Sharon Isbin is an outgoing, populist virtuoso, and both Christopher Rouse's "Concert de Gaudí" and Tan Dun's Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra, which she has recorded on the Teldec label, are immediately accessible pieces. The Rouse, an homage to the surreal creations of the Barcelona architect, could be a deconstruction of Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez": familiar bits of Spanish guitar music are melted and bent into grotesque new shapes, but with a childlike glee that keeps the piece light and entertaining. Dun, who won an Academy Award for his score to "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," is a master of atmosphere. His concerto is a brooding evocation of the shamanistic funeral rites of his native Hunan, with a fiery touch of flamenco; Isbin convincingly imitates the shimmering sounds of the pi-pa, the Chinese lute.

Eliot Fisk, a more urbane and subtle artist, finds a soul mate in George Rochberg, the veteran American composer whose rich and thoughtful scores have preserved the best classical traditions without alienating modern audiences. "Muse of Fire," the standout of Fisk's rewarding all-Rochberg disk (on Arabesque), teams Fisk with the wonderful flutist Paula Robison. Inspired by the opening line of "Henry V," its percussive battlefield effects and folklike lyricism intimate a Shakespearean romance in miniature. "Eden: Out of Time & Out of Space," a grand but contemplative guitar concerto, features the clarinettist David Shifrin and other members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, while Fisk goes it alone in "American Bouquet," imaginatively recomposed versions of standards by Gershwin, Rodgers, and other masters—including Rochberg, whose "Notre Dame Blues" lets Fisk indulge in some high-class, low-down fun.

Diego Luzuriaga's "Once Canciones: Eleven Songs" (Fertile Ground Music) are the simplest of all these pieces, but their joys go even deeper. Luzuriaga wrote his own words for these melancholy and affecting songs about children, family, and the ordinary trials of life, and their dressed-down style will be as attractive to Jobim fans as they will to lovers of classical art song. Bill Girolamo's guitar playing may take a back seat to Dana Hanchard's lovely soprano, but, since the tightly coiled, birdlike timbre of her voice can evoke memories of such legends as Suzanne Danco and Bidú Sayão, that is no mean place to be.

—*Russell Platt*

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## MOVIES OPENING

**JEEPERS CREEPERS**
A horror film written and directed by Victor Salva in which a brother and sister encounter an evil creature on a deserted country road. Opening Aug. 31.

**O**
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Aug. 31.

## FILM NOTES

**AMERICAN PIE 2**
More humiliating sex adventures from America's favorite dumb-dumb teens. In this one, they allegedly take the next step into adulthood, but the material seems more infantile and antierotic than ever. It's amazing that actual teen-agers accept this picture of themselves and don't throw popcorn or something worse at the screen. With Jason Biggs, showing some comic style as the stumbling Jim, and Chris Klein, Seann William Scott, Mena Suvari, and Eugene Levy.—*David Denby* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Waverly.)

**APOCALYPSE NOW REDUX**
Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the jungle . . . Francis Ford Coppola's steaming, misshapen epic, now twenty-two years old, is with us once more, and it feels madder and more necessary than ever: an all but unanswerable rebuke to the cinematic flimsiness of the interim. With the editorial support of Walter Murch, Coppola has revisited the scene of his movie and recut from the original dailies, adding, along the way, some forty-nine minutes of excised footage. This includes, you will be charmed to discover, more sex: a dinner party and postprandial seduction scene on a French plantation, and the dreamy, sorrowful coupling of soldiers and Playboy models in the cockpit of a grounded helicopter. Whether we need this stuff remains arguable, but it certainly thickens the surfeit of half-satisfied desires that were already boiling away inside the movie. For good measure, there is also our first sight of Brando in broad daylight, mocking the imprisoned Martin Sheen. The new print is ripe and lustrous, and the sound recording—of river whispers as much as of music—could have come straight from a hypnotist's handbook.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/6/01.) (Astor Plaza, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

**BAND OF OUTSIDERS**
The two heroes (Claude Brasseur and Sami Frey) begin by playacting crime-and-violence movies, then really act them out in their lives. Their girl (Anna Karina), wanting to be accepted, tells them there is money in the villa where she lives. And we watch, apprehensive and puzzled, as the three of them go through the robbery they're committing as if it were something in a movie—or a fairy tale. The crime doesn't fit the daydreamers or their milieu: we half expect to be told it's all a joke—that they can't really be committing an armed robbery. This Jean-Luc Godard film is like a reverie of a gangster movie as students in an espresso bar might remember it or plan it. It has the gangster-film virtues (loyalty, daring) but they are mixed with innocence, amorality, lack of equilibrium. It's as if a French poet took a banal American crime novel and told it to us in terms of the romance and beauty he read between the lines; Godard re-creates the gangsters and the moll with his world of associations—seeing them as people in a Paris café, mixing them with Rimbaud, Kafka, Alice in Wonderland. This 1964 lyrical tragicomedy is perhaps Godard's most delicately charming film. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum.)

**THE CURSE OF THE JADE SCORPION**
Woody Allen's latest comedy, set in an auburn-colored and jazz-haunted past, looks good, but the picture feels attenuated, redundant, and trivial. Dressed in a fedora and a loosened tie, Allen plays a garrulous nineteen-forties insurance investigator (a sort of crotchety, self-pitying Edward G. Robinson). Helen Hunt is the newly hired office-efficiency expert (a Rosalind Russell type, except blond). They meet, hate each other, and engage in baroquely phrased period insults that allegedly hide their true attraction. The plot turns on the manipulations of a mesmerist (David Ogden Stiers) who intones magical words into the telephone, causing people to fall into trances and commit crimes. This may be funny when seen once, but when it becomes the central plot device it's remarkably uninteresting—hardly worth the attention Allen gives it. Woody himself is looking a little worn, and his flirting, however acidly, with an actress almost thirty years younger than himself (Charlize Theron) becomes embarrassing. You have to enjoy the movie (if you can) as a put-on, not as the romantic comedy it's intended to be.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

**THE DEEP END**
A heartfelt and beautifully made neo-noir thriller that takes its moods and colors from the turquoise blue of Lake Tahoe. A mother of three, Margaret (Tilda Swinton), discovers a dead body outside her family's lakeside home one morning. It is her teenage son's gay lover, a Reno club owner and lowlife, and Margaret sets about disposing of the corpse as if it were a particularly cumbersome household nuisance. This domestic heroine gets drawn deeper and deeper into secrecy and danger while running around taking her children to their lessons. The movie, which is beautifully shot by Giles Nuttgens, develops rhapsodic and fatalistic moods that hold you even when the story becomes improbable. With Jonathan Tucker as the son with whom Margaret has a largely silent bond, and Goran Visnjic as a sad-eyed, melancholy blackmailer whom she perversely finds attractive. Written and directed by the team of Scott McGehee and David Siegel.—*D.D.* (8/13/01) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

**FIGHTER**
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**THE 400 BLOWS**
François Truffaut's first feature, released in 1959, struck a direct blow for personal cinema, reaching international audiences simply on the strength of the director's perceptiveness and honesty, and of his ability to evoke (as he wrote of Jean Vigo) "short pants, school days, and the blackboard . . . our beginnings." The antihero is Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), a thirteen-year-old rebel filled with inchoate yearnings. He brings a tragicomic volatility to the film. Photographed by Henri Decaë, it's packed with racing images: Doinel scampering through Paris streets, whirling on a carnival ride, and (most famously) galloping toward the seashore. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Cinema Classics; Aug. 29-31.)

**GHOST WORLD**
Two strip-mall Savonarolas, Enid (Thora Birch) and Rebecca (Scarlett Johansson), gaze with disgust at the fallen world around them. Terry Zwigoff's movie is based on Daniel Clowes's cartoon novel, which he and Clowes adapted. For a while, "Ghost World" seems to be a new type of dyspeptic comedy, acid yet tender. Zwigoff's sense of visual elegance gives clarity and snap to material that might have fallen into a crabby nowheresville. But the movie loses its cool. It zeros in on Enid's unhappiness, and she begins to seem like a typical teen-ager, one who makes jokes to cover her pain and who needs to grow up. See it for Birch's hostile stare and Johansson's devastating monotone. With Steve Buscemi as a nominal adult who collects vintage blues seventy-eights.—*D.D.* (8/6/01) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH**
Trash perfection. Flamboyant costumes, lollipop colors, and glam-rock music come together explosively in John Cameron Mitchell's movie adaptation of his Off Broadway hit. Hedwig, a transsexual rocker, tours the dives of America in pursuit of her gorgeous, successful former protégé (Michael Pitt). Her band is called the Angry Inch (which also refers to the result of a botched sex-change operation), and her story unwinds in a series of monologues and rocking stage performances. Mitchell's confident, nonpandering direction brings out cheeky performances from his actors, and songwriter Stephen Trask's tunes, worthy of Bowie at his gender-bending best, wrap the film in loving, outré fashion.—*Bruce Diones* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

**JAY AND SILENT BOB STRIKE BACK**
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

**JOHNNY O'CLOCK**
Robert Rossen made his directing début with this 1947 lightweight, hardboiled melodrama (which he also wrote). Dick Powell steps lively as the title character, a slick gambling-club manager who matches wits with his jealous, thuggish boss (Thomas Gomez) and a smart homicide cop (Lee J. Cobb). Rossen injects humor and tension into the proceedings without getting too campy. He plays on the theatricality of his hero's name—"O'Clock, O'Clock, O'Clock," Gomez laments, "all the time it kept ticking in my head." Nina Foch plays a sacrificial lamb; Evelyn Keyes and Ellen Drew provide the sex appeal.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; Sept. 4.)

**LEGALLY BLONDE**
The fabulous Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon), a West Coast sorority queen, follows her escaping boyfriend to Harvard Law School, where she shows up wearing leather and carrying a Chihuahua in her arms. The first-time director Robert Luketic displays a talent for candied artifice and gentle parody, but "Legally Blonde" collapses very quickly into low-grade farce. Almost everyone at Harvard is a jerk or a phony, and the plot, including a murder trial, is sitcom-obvious. See it only for the talented Witherspoon, who manages to embody the Cosmo girl, Lancômed to the hilt.—*D.D.* (7/16/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

**LUMUMBA**
Raoul Peck tells the story of the African freedom fighter Patrice Lumumba with fire and grace. The opening scene sets the vérité tone with the sound of a saw cutting through bone; two Belgian soldiers are breaking down Lumumba's body and incinerating it in a ten-gallon drum. From there, the film backtracks to the origins of the Congolese independence movement and proceeds to explain how a man's legacy could be so threatening. Peck handles all of this, including the atrocities, with refinement, and lets the drama of Lumumba's story run smoothly, free of heavy historical detail. Eriq Ebouaney is extraordinary in the lead role, the production feels emotionally true, and the speeches generate spontaneous applause. In French and Lingala.—*Michael Agger* (The Screening Room.)

**MADE**
Jon Favreau and Vince Vaughn reprise their Mutt-and-Jeff act from "Swingers," but this time in a

context uncertainly derived from Martin Scorsese's "Mean Streets." A nasty Los Angeles crime boss (Peter Falk) sends the two men—amateurs as criminals—to New York to do a job. The heavyset Favreau is morose and fearful and just wants to come home in one piece; Vaughn, boastful, unreliable, and stupid, has the time of his life. Favreau, who wrote and directed, veers back and forth between comedy and a more serious tone, and the movie winds up suspended in the air. The two actors try to pull the entire story out of their friendship with each other, but the psychological underpinnings are missing: we never really understand what holds this odd couple together. With Sean (Puffy) Combs, viciously incisive as a downtown Manhattan gangster.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, Empire 25, and Union Square.)

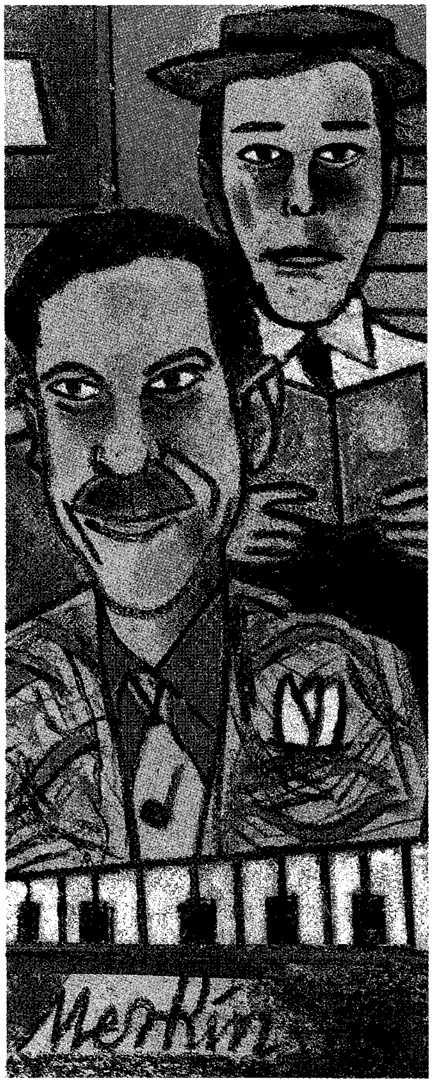
**MONKEY BUSINESS**
The four Marx Brothers as anarchic stowaways on an ocean liner who get involved with bootleggers and Thelma Todd. This 1931 picture is the first of their films written directly for the screen (by S. J. Perelman, Will B. Johnstone, and Arthur Sheekman). Norman McLeod directed this heavenly, corny nonsense, which features such songs as "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me" and "When I Take My Sugar to Tea."—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Sept. 3-4.)

**O**
This transposition of "Othello" to a Southern prep school, with Mekhi Phifer as a black star basketball player, Julia Stiles as his white girlfriend, and Josh Hartnett as a jealous white rival on the team, was held from distribution for two years, following the shootings at Columbine, but there was probably no need for caution, since the movie is sincere, nonexploitative, and heartfelt, and has no resemblance to any of the school shootings. Phifer's performance develops some tragic power, but Hartnett's Iago figure, without the benefit of verse—or Verdi's music—seems merely improbable. The movie is a decent try, but the attempts to stay close to Shakespeare's plot and to say something about American racism make for a complicated and confused way of telling a story that should have been straightforward. With Martin Sheen as the volatile coach of the basketball team. Directed by Tim Blake Nelson, sensitively, but without sensuality or excitement.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

**THE OTHERS**
Nicole Kidman, with a hairdo that makes her look like a red-headed Grace Kelly, plays an upper-class Englishwoman living in a big house on Jersey at the end of the Second World War. Her husband is off fighting, and her two small children are so sensitive to light that the curtains must always be drawn and anyone passing from room to room must shut one door before opening the next. The electricity is out, and the house is covered in fog. One rather misses a beast howling on the moors or a madwoman in the attic, but there are voices, many voices, and the servants make creepy remarks. The Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar works by suggestion much of the time: he favors ambiguity rather than outright horrors, and the sepulchral gray light of the house and grounds can be elegant. But the movie becomes monotonous; it's like a sluggish computer game in which movement is limited to one room at a time.—*D.D.* (8/13/01) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

**PLANET OF THE APES**
The apes are pretty terrific, especially Tim Roth as General Thade, a simian Fascist in samurai armor. They leap and roar like very active animals, not like actors in hoods. The director Tim Burton uses his patented black-on-black color palette, and the great cinematographer Philippe Rousselot puts a gleam into the ebony images. But if the movie's production skills are extraordinary, its dramatic skills are pathetic. Burton and his screenwriters never capture the grand sense of myth which made the original 1968 version so haunting. Even routine plot details are impossibly vague. Mark Wahlberg is vague, too. He doesn't have enough expression in his face to carry a movie alone, and "Apes" devolves into pointless chases and battles.—*D.D.* (8/6/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

**THE SCORE**
An intelligent and rather overcivilized caper movie that features three generations of great male actors: Marlon Brando (sounding like his long-ago nemesis Truman Capote) as an upper-class aesthete and fence with exquisite manners, Robert De Niro as a saturnine jazz-club owner and safecracker who never takes risks, and Edward Norton as a brilliant but willful young con man and criminal. The acting is so relaxed and skillful that one can enjoy the smooth precision as a virtue in itself. Unfortunately, the writers and the director, Frank Oz, worked out the plot without working out how the audience should feel about anything that happens. Emotionally, the movie is neutered.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)



RICHARD MERKIN

SLAPSTICK SONATAS *A nice evening (or matinée) at Film Forum on September 3rd: Buster Keaton's "Seven Chances" with live piano accompaniment by Steve Sterner.*

**SEVEN CHANCES**
The plot gimmick—the hero must be married in a few hours in order to collect an inheritance—is an antique, and the play flopped on Broadway, but what Buster Keaton and his gag writers managed to do with the material will be everlastingly fresh. When the news of the shy hero's need to wed is published in the papers, prospective brides arrive, singly at first and then in droves, and the distraught man, fleeing them, dislodges a boulder, which dislodges others, and soon he is pursued by hundreds of huge boulders. It's a lovely comedy, imaginatively—possibly faultlessly—directed by Keaton. Silent; originally released in 1925.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Sept. 3.)

**SEXY BEAST**
A tale of expatriate Cockneys, dry-roasted by the Spanish sun and determined to get England off their backs. Gal (Ray Winstone), once a crook, and his wife, Deedee (Amanda Redman), once a porno star, have retired to the Costa del Sol; now they are tracked down by an old acquaintance, Don (Ben Kingsley), who invites Gal back home for one last crime. Jonathan Glazer, the young British director making his début feature, turns the first half of the picture into a cool study of hotheads, saturated with creative cursing; the second half, which finds Gal returning to London, stumbles and slides into the grim traditions of gangsterland. But the movie needs to be seen for its clean compositions, its sure touch of fantasy, and, above all, for the forbidding presence of Kingsley—the prince of darkness, lightly disguised as a human being.—*A.L.* (6/18 & 25/01) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS**
For several years, Tony Curtis had been a virtual guarantor of box-office success, and the New York locations for this 1957 film were invaded by thousands of teen-agers, who broke through police barricades to get to their idol. But these throngs ignored the completed picture, in which Curtis grew up into an actor and gave what will probably be remembered as the best performance of his career. Even the presence of that other box-office guarantor, Burt Lancaster, did not lift the picture from the red ink. This is understandable, because the movie is a slice of perversity—a study of dollar and power worship, with Lancaster as a Broadway gossip columnist and Curtis as an ingratiating, blackmailing press agent. Clifford Odets never came through more pungently as a screenwriter; his distinctively idiomatic dialogue generally seems like bad poetry when it's spoken from the screen, but here it's harshly expressive and taut. The director, Alexander Mackendrick, has a crisp film-noir style: the production is shaped by a zest for the corrupt milieu, the pulsating big-city life (what used to be called "the symphony of a city")—the streets, the night clubs, the cynical types, the noise and desperation.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Aug. 30-Sept. 2.)

**THE 39 STEPS**
At the time, Alfred Hitchcock explained the point of view behind this 1935 picture: "I am out to give the public good, healthy, mental shake-ups. Civilization has become so screening and sheltering that we cannot experience sufficient thrills at first hand. Therefore, to prevent our becoming sluggish and jellified, we have to experience them artificially." What fun to make a movie in an era when people still needed a bit of a jolt! Even now, Hitchcock's little jolts are more surprising than most of the shocks engineered to stun modern audiences. This suave, amusing spy melodrama is directed with so sure a touch that the suspense is charged with wit; it's one of the three or four best things Hitchcock ever did. With Robert Donat, Madeleine Carroll, and Godfrey Tearle.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 1-2.)

**TOGETHER**
Lukas Moodysson's exemplary comedy, one part distressing to two parts delectable, is set in a hippie commune in the mid-nineteen-seventies—in Sweden, no less, where the hippie ethic was an article of faith. Within minutes, we know not only where we are but whom we are dealing with; as a director, Moodysson is the perfect host, calmly introducing us, without the trace of a sneer, to a broad selection of trolls and fruitcakes. What follows is a dance of desire, as men, women, and even children pair off with one another; under it all, like

a bass note, sounds the story of Elisabeth (Lisa Lindgren) and her drunken husband, Rolf (Michael Nyqvist), strangers to this utopian colony, who finally find refuge, and a kind of reconciliation, in its absurd dreams. That is Moodysson's great trick: to blow hot and cold, allowing us both to laugh at these bearded types and to respect, even envy, their frazzled companionship. With the excellent Emma Samuelsson as the warring couple's daughter, and with the help of Abba—what did you expect?—on the soundtrack. In Swedish.—*A.L.* (8/20 & 27/01) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**WET HOT AMERICAN SUMMER**
Michael Showalter and David Wain of the sketch-comedy group the State wrote and directed this hilarious coming-of-age marathon set at Camp Firewood, Maine, in August, 1981—a time when pulled-up white socks could be worn safely. What's impressive here is the pace; by cramming an entire summer of pranks, hookups, defeats, and comebacks into a single day, Wain and Showalter keep the jokes zipping along. Janeane Garofalo, David Hyde Pierce, Paul Rudd, Molly Shannon, and the other actors ham it up for laughs with a raunchiness tempered by deadpan earnestness. Best are the throwaway moments, such as when a Kenyan runner appears out of nowhere and sprints past everyone in capture the flag.—*M.A.* (Empire 25 and Village East Cinemas.)

## ALSO PLAYING

**AMERICAN OUTLAWS**
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Village East Cinemas.

**AUDITION**
BAM Rose Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.

**BUBBLE BOY**
Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.

**CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN**
Battery Park 16, Beekman, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.

**DOWNTOWN 81**
Pioneer.

**INNOCENCE**
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

**JOHN CARPENTER'S GHOSTS OF MARS**
Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.

**LISA PICARD IS FAMOUS**
Film Forum.

**RAT RACE**
Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.

**RUSH HOUR 2**
Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, Union Square, and Waverly.

**SUMMER CATCH**
Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

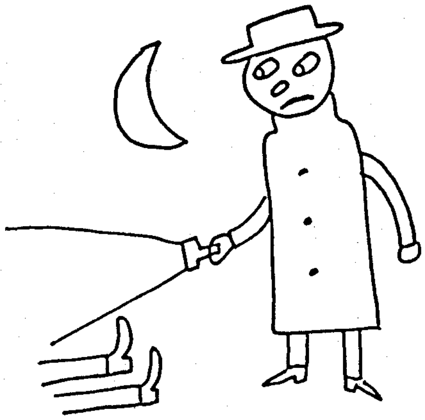
*Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.*

**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St.
**Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at Broadway.
**BAM Rose Cinemas,** 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
**Battery Park 16,** West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
**Beekman,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd St.
**Chelsea West,** 333 W. 23rd St.
**Cinema I,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema II,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema 3rd Avenue,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema Village,** 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
**Coronet Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 59th St.
**East 85th Street,** First Ave. at 85th St.
**East 86th Street Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**84th Street Sixplex,** Broadway at 84th St.
**Empire 25,** on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th St.
**Film Forum,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
**First & 62nd Cinemas,** 400 E. 62nd St.
**42nd Street E Walk,** 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
**Kips Bay Theatre,** Second Ave. at 32nd St.
**Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,** Broadway at 63rd St.
**Lincoln Square,** Broadway at 68th St.
**Metro Cinema 1 and 2,** Broadway at 99th St.
**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th St.
**New York Twin,** Second Ave. at 67th St.
**19th Street East 6,** Broadway at 19th St.
**Olympia I and II,** Broadway at 107th St.
**Orpheum VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Paris,** 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th St.
**Pioneer,** 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th St.
**The Screening Room,** 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
**72nd Street East,** Third Ave. at 71st St.
**64th and 2nd,** Second Ave. at 64th St.
**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd St.
**State,** Broadway at 45th St.
**Sutton 1 and 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.
**Union Square,** Broadway at 13th St.
**Village East Cinemas,** Second Ave. at 12th St.
**Village Theatre VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.
**Walter Reade Theatre,** Lincoln Center (875-5600).
**Waverly 1 and 2,** Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th St.

## REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.*

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 9: "Hollywood on the Home Front: American Film in the 1940's." Sept. 1 at 2: "Double Indemnity" (1944, Billy Wilder). ♦ Sept. 1 at 4: "The Big Clock" (1948, John Farrow). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2: "Force of Evil" (1948, Abraham Polonsky). ♦ Sept. 2 at 4: "Moonrise" (1948, Frank Borzage). ♦ Repertory nights. Sept. 1-2 at 6:30: "The 39 Steps" (†).



PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

**BAM ROSE CINEMAS**
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—Through Aug. 31: Seven decades of cinema from Portugal. All films are in Portuguese. Aug. 29 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Silvestre" (1982, João César Monteiro). ♦ Aug. 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Hard Times" (1988, João Botelho). ♦ Aug. 31 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "River of Gold" (1998, Paulo Rocha). ♦ Sept. 1-2 at 2, 4:45, and 7:30: "North by Northwest" (1959, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Sept. 3 at 2, 3:40, 5:20, 7, and 8:40 and Sept. 4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Monkey Business" (†).

**CINEMA CLASSICS**
332 E. 11th St. (677-5368)—Aug. 29-31 at 8 and 10: "The 400 Blows" (†). ♦ Sept. 1-2 at 6, 8, and 10 and Sept. 3-4 at 8 and 10: "Manhattan" (1979, Woody Allen).

**FILM FORUM**
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Oct. 4: "N.Y.P.D.," an eight-week festival of New York City crime movies. Aug. 29 at 2:45, 6:15, and 9:45: "Who Killed Teddy Bear?" (1965, Joseph Cates). ♦ Aug. 29 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "God Told Me To" (1977, Larry Cohen). ♦ Aug. 30-Sept. 2 at 2:55, 6:40, and 10:25: "Sweet Smell of Success" (†). ♦ Aug. 30-Sept. 2: "The Wrong Man" (1956, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Sept. 4 at 2:15, 6, and 9:45: "Johnny O'Clock" (†). ♦ Sept. 4 at 4 and 7:45: "Johnny Eager" (1941, Mervyn LeRoy). ♦ Mondays through Oct. 1: Buster Keaton classics. Sept. 3 at 2, 4:45, 7:30, and 10:15: "Seven Chances" (†). The 2 and 7:30 shows feature live piano accompaniment. ♦ Sept. 3 at 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Spite Marriage" (1929).

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Sept. 7: A retrospective of the cinematography of James Wong Howe (1899-1976). Aug. 30 at 3:30 and Aug. 31 at 8:15: "The Molly Maguires" (1970, Martin Ritt). ♦ Aug. 30 at 6 and Aug. 31 at 6: "Hud" (1963, Ritt). ♦ Sept. 1 at 2: "Transatlantic" (1931, William K. Howard). ♦ Sept. 1 at 5 and Sept. 3 at 2:30: "The Spider" (1931, William Cameron Menzies and Kenneth MacKenna). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2 and Sept. 3 at 6: "The North Star" (1943, Lewis Milestone). ♦ Sept. 2 at 5 and Sept. 4 at 2:30: "Seconds" (1966, John Frankenheimer). ♦ James Bond films. Sept. 4 at 6: "From Russia with Love" (1963, Terence Young).

**THE MUSEUM OF TELEVISION & RADIO**
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Sept. 16: "Hello, Goodbye," screenings of classic television shows. Aug. 29-Sept. 2 at 3: The first two (and only) episodes of Jackie Gleason's game show, "You're in the Picture," and the première and final episode of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." ♦ Aug. 30 at 6 and Aug. 31 at 7: The pilot episodes for the "The Twilight Zone" and "Star Trek."

**THE SCREENING ROOM**
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Aug. 29-Sept. 4 at 3:30, 5:45, 8, and 10:15: "Monterey Pop" (1969, D. A. Pennebaker).

**WALTER READE THEATRE**
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Sept. 5: "Latin Beat 2001!," recent films from Latin America. Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Spanish. Aug. 29 at 1, Aug. 31 at 9:30, and Sept. 2 at 3: "At Half Past Midnight" (1999, Mariana Rondón and Marité Ugas). ♦ Aug. 29 at 3 and 7:15 and Sept. 1 at 9:45: "The Vineyard" (2000, Esteban Schroeder). ♦ Aug. 29 at 5 and Aug. 31 at 2:30: "Time Out" (1998, Sergio Cabrera). ♦ Aug. 29 at 9:15: "Cuba, Island of Music" (2000, Gary Keys; in English and Spanish). ♦ Aug. 30 at 1, Sept. 2 at 5, and Sept. 3 at 5:45: "Coronation" (2000, Silvio Caiozzi). ♦ Aug. 30 at 4, Aug. 31 at 7:30, and Sept. 3 at 3:45: "Play for Me" (2001, Rodrigo Fürth). ♦ Aug. 30 at 6:15, Aug. 31 at 5:15, and Sept. 1 at 3: "Ratas, Ratones, Rateros" (1999, Sebastián Cordero). ♦ Aug. 30 at 8:30 and Sept. 1 at 5:15: "The Dog's Will" (1999, Guel Arraes; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 31 at 1: "Florentino and the Devil" (1995, Michaal New). ♦ Sept. 1 at 7:30, Sept. 2 at 8:15, and Sept. 3 at 9: "Sex, Shame, and Tears" (1999, Antonio Serrano). ♦ Sept. 3 at 1: "Black Tears" (1997, Sonia Herman Dolz). ♦ Sept. 4 at 1: "A Paradise Under the Stars" (1999, Gerardo Chijona). ♦ Movies for kids. Sept. 1-2 at 1: "The Pintins to the Rescue" (2000, Franco Bittolo).

This is Kate taking a vacation.
This is Kate's money not taking a vacation.

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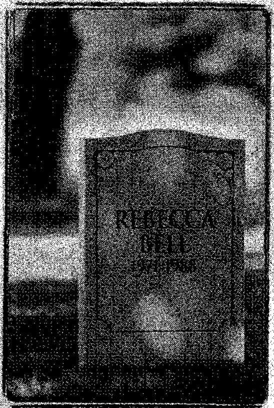
# WHICH WOULD YOU RATHER LOSE? a. CONTROL OVER YOUR DAUGHTER'S REPRODUCTIVE DECISIONS b. YOUR DAUGHTER

"Mom, Dad, I love you. Forgive me." Those were the last words spoken by seventeen-year-old Becky Bell. She died in her hospital bed seconds later. Both her parents were at her side.

A few days after Becky passed away, the coroner called the Bells: "Your daughter died of an illegal, botched abortion; dirty instruments had been used." The grieving Bells were horrified. How? Why?



In Indiana, as in the majority of states, the law requires teens to go to their parents or court before they can get an abortion.

Becky was too ashamed to involve her parents, even though she came from a warm, caring household.

Some teens must overcome far more than shame and embarrassment. Too many already face abuse, violence and incest on a daily basis. Parental involvement laws only serve to deepen their desperation.

The examples are endless. A thirteen-year-old in Massachusetts was raped by her mother's boyfriend. She got pregnant. Compelled by state law, she informed her mother. Her mother called her a slut and threw her out of the house.

A crisis center counselor recalls getting a call from a distressed sixteen-year-old who was too afraid to confront her parents with her pregnancy. She had her boyfriend punch her in the stomach in an attempt to abort. She began hemorrhaging. She refused to go to the hospital until she was promised that no one would notify her parents. Dying was less scary than involving them.

Parental involvement laws don't help families. They harm young women.

The current administration is intent on eroding the reproductive rights of both teens and women in general.

Please support our efforts to protect teens and others from dangerous, anti-choice laws. Please support the ACLU. For more information, visit www.aclu.org/reprofreedom.

american civil liberties union
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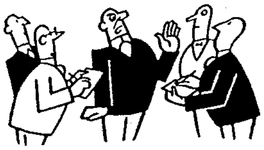
THE
NEW YORKER

# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

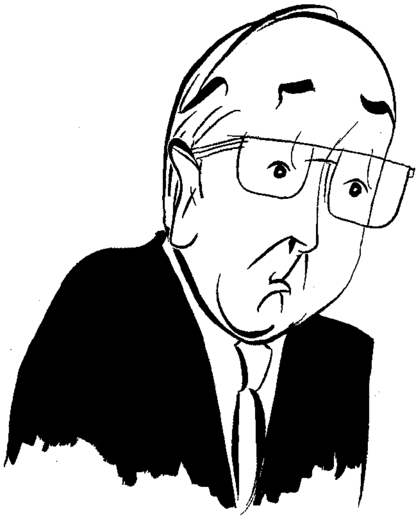
## COMMENT
## SHEER HELMS



When a "colorful" celebrity has achieved some sort of sustained and nominally respectable worldly accomplishment (record sales, business success, public office), and has been around long enough to acquire the appealing vulnerability of old age, and has not been convicted of a capital crime, there's a powerful tendency to go all warm and fuzzy on him. So it is at the moment for Jesse Helms, the senior senator from North Carolina. With his announcement, last Wednesday, that he will not seek a sixth term next year, Helms became a certified legend—the feisty (but always courteous) conservative icon, the plain-spoken Tarheel who never feared to be politically incorrect, the paragon of traditional values who always let you know where he stood and is destined to be remembered, as President Bush put it, as "a tireless defender of our nation's freedom and a champion of democracy abroad."

The strangest tribute came from Walter Russell Mead, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and normally a levelheaded (if chronically puckish) observer. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Mead described Helms as "one of a handful of Southern statesmen who ensured the triumph of the civil rights revolution"—and not, as you might suppose, by provoking disgust and indignation among the fair-minded with the crude racism that was his stock-in-trade (along with an "anti-Communism" that treated liberal reform and Soviet tyranny as indistinguishable). According to Mead, the decisive contribution of Jesse Helms was that "once the civil rights legislation of the 1960s was enacted"—over Helms's unremitting and demagogic opposition, by the way—"he accepted the laws and obeyed them." Also, in edifying contrast to his counterparts of a century earlier, he refrained from "being directly and openly involved in the murder of black political leaders."

Talk about lowering the bar! But Helms never bothered with the soft bigotry of low expectations. He has always preferred the hard stuff, undiluted by the branch water of euphemism. Many of the Helms retrospectives of recent days have dated his entry into serious politics to 1960, when, after having spent most of his thirties as a banking lobbyist, he began delivering nightly five-minute commentaries on a Raleigh television station and on something called the Tobacco Radio Network—the job that propelled him into the Senate, twelve years later. But as far back as 1950, Helms, then twenty-eight, helped run what the Duke University historian William H. Chafe has called "the bitterest, ugliest, most smear-ridden campaign of modern times," the race to unseat Frank P. Graham, the former president of the University of North Carolina and probably the most distinguished North Carolinian ever to sit in the United States Senate. "The Graham campaign is generally viewed as the most pivotal in modern southern history since it set the precedent for the race-baiting and red-baiting tactics that were later employed so widely by politicians like Orval Faubus, George Wallace, and Jesse Helms," Chafe has written. "Helms, of course, helped invent these tactics." Over the succeeding half century, Helms changed but little. His own campaigns have invariably been powered by appeals to prejudice, racial and otherwise. In recent years the focus of his bigotry has shifted increasingly toward gays and lesbians. But his disdain for people of color (exemplified by his "humorous" habit, in private, of referring to any black person as "Fred") continues to find ways of expressing itself. He is the



*Senator Jesse Helms*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

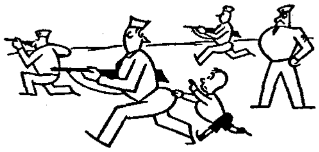
Senate's most reliable opponent of any measure aimed at securing the rights or improving the conditions of African-Americans. In 1994, when Nelson Mandela visited the Capitol, Helms ostentatiously turned his back on him.

To be fair, the snub of the South African President probably had less to do with race per se than with foreign policy, the field in which Helms, who since 1986 has been either the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or its ranking Republican, has done his worst mischief. His vaunted anti-Communism was never based upon a principled belief in democracy. His support of the apartheid regime was of a piece with his enthusiasm for any dictatorship, no matter how brutal, that could plausibly be described as right wing. (He even supported the Argentine junta in the Falklands war with Britain.) He has crippled America's diplomatic corps, systematically starving the State Department of funds and capriciously blocking the confirmation of highly qualified ambassadorial nominees. But it is in his unrelenting hostility to international institutions that he has done his greatest and probably most lasting damage.

The gauzy story line of the past week requires Helms to have "mellowed," the main piece of evidence being his agreement, in 1999, to allow payment of some nine hundred million dollars of the $1.3 billion in back dues the United States then owed the United Nations. Never mind that it was he who had abused the rules of the Senate to hold up the payments in the first place, or that the United States was on the verge of being deeply embarrassed by losing its right to vote in the General Assembly. The real significance of the episode is that what was supposed to be legally binding has now been certified as volitional. A new "principle"—that the solemn obligations of the United States are subject to abrogation without notice by congressional ideologues—has become ever more entrenched. America's U.N. bill, by the way, remains unpaid; it now amounts to $2.3 billion, a record, thanks to the machinations of such mini-Helmses as Tom DeLay, the House majority whip. Helms's heirs now populate the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, too: the national-security apparatus of the Bush Administration is heavily salted with his former assistants. Little wonder that the Administration adds almost weekly to the long list of useful international treaties it proposes to reject, abrogate, or simply scrap. The retirement of Jesse Helms has been hailed (and mourned) as "the end of an era." If only that were true.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

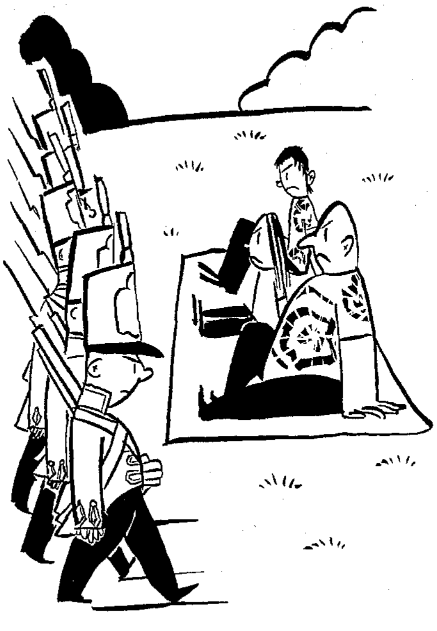
## DEPT. OF WAR
## ROUTED BY REDCOATS, AGAIN



The big difference between the Battle of Brooklyn as it actually happened, in August of 1776, and the Battle of Brooklyn as it was re-created, the other day, in celebration of its two-hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary, had to do with the element of surprise. In 1776, the British surprised the Continental Army (which was making its first real appearance as the Continental Army). In 2001, there was advance intelligence of troop movement—signs had been posted on telephone poles all over Park Slope the week before, saying, "Between the hours of 1 P.M. and 3 P.M. there will be loud noise (cannon fire and muskets firing) coming from Prospect Park." Yet, even though this was probably the only time in the history of New York that gunshots were announced *before* a shooting, when the first shots were fired a lot of the cops who were stationed alongside the battlefield jumped.

It was a beautiful day for marking the anniversary of what is billed, in Brooklyn, as the most important battle of the Revolutionary War—the rout, basically, of the vastly outnumbered American troops (four thousand Yanks versus twenty thousand Brits). Parkgoers crowded around a red snow fence that surrounded a football-field-size stretch of Prospect Park's Long Meadow. Prior to the actual simulated fight, there were numerous speeches, all extolling Brooklyn, all drawing unsolicited remarks from the crowd. Example of extolling, from the Brooklyn parks commissioner: "As a Brooklynite, I am very proud of the role that Brooklyn played in the Battle of Brooklyn." Example of a subsequent unsolicited remark, from a guy: "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

At approximately one-thirty, a small group of soldiers marched out of a grove of trees near the park's Third Street entrance. The soldiers were identified over loudspeakers as General George Washington's guard and were portrayed by the members of Alpha Company, a real infantry unit of the United States Army. The men of Alpha Company demonstrated a few eighteenth-century battle techniques, and they looked sharp, as opposed to the rest of the Continental forces, who marched like typical battle reënacters. Next, the British came down from the woods at the north end of the park; they had to march around a man in a tie-dyed shirt, who was sitting on a blanket with children also in tie-dyes, and who felt that the Redcoats had no right to make him get out of the way. The British quickly advanced toward the American line, then stopped in front of a row of port-a-johns. The fighting commenced. Flintlocks and rifles discharged, men shouted, drums drummed. Fire flashed from the muzzles of the guns, and puffs of smoke rose slowly from the lawn and drifted over the trees.



For a few minutes, the Americans seemed prepared to change the course of history; by two-fifteen, a British soldier was playing dead in the middle of Long Meadow. (The "dead" soldier kept drinking water, to the disgust of the young boys in the crowd.) But then British reinforcements, a group of pretend Hessian mercenaries, arrived. Now Americans began falling, amid shouts of simulated terror. The master of ceremonies announced, "These incredible foolhardy men, with great courage, with great love for their country, are holding on!"

Moments later, the foolhardy men gave up and reënacted retreat, with, first, the Redcoats and then the spectators in hot pursuit. Everyone headed five blocks down Third Street, toward the Gowanus Canal, past families sitting on the stoops of their brownstones, past people selling stuff on their stoops, past a stoop-centered birthday party, past a man begging some police officers to let him pull out of a parking spot so that he could get his family to the airport.

The troops stopped at the Old Stone House, a two-story, three-hundred-year-old Dutch farmhouse. In 1776, four hundred American soldiers from Maryland and Delaware faced two thousand British troops here, repeatedly capturing and losing the place, and giving the rest of General Washington's forces a chance to escape across what was then Gowanus Creek. The reënacters worked hard to re-create this act of bravery—one of them had to be treated for heatstroke by paramedics. But, in the end, the reënactment was a little anticlimactic: the Continental forces seemed to just sort of vanish mysteriously into the Old Stone House. As they did, the crowd wandered off for Italian ices. This is not to say that the Brooklyn officials were not ecstatic. "There are cities that base their whole tourism industry on a historical event that doesn't hold a candle to what happened in Brooklyn," one of them was heard to say. "You know, you don't have to go to Williamsburg. You can go to Williamsburg, Brooklyn!"

—*Robert Sullivan*

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## PROMPTING DEPT.
## LETTERMAN'S LETTER MAN

Almost every weekday afternoon, in a small, well-ventilated office above the Ed Sullivan Theatre, Tony Mendez pours black industrial-grade ink into marker pens, studies the first draft of David Letterman's monologue, and begins copying out each joke, in big capital letters, onto a twenty-two-by-fourteen-inch slab of cardboard. For example: "Cl. gave his staff / tour of / new offices / he showed / interns / how to go down in / freight elevator." "My handwriting is bad, but my printing is good," Mendez said the other day. "And that's all that matters."

Mendez is one of the last veteran practitioners of the dying art of preparing and holding cue cards. Of course, no one sets out to conquer this particular corner of show business, and Mendez, who is fifty-six years old, took a circuitous route to it, but he does have real cue-card roots. When Mendez was fifteen, he fled his native Cuba with his parents and settled in Los Angeles. His mother, who became a Spanish teacher at U.C.L.A., happened to get acquainted with a man named Barney McNulty, who was the first person to use cue cards on TV and came to be known as "the cue-card king." McNulty got Mendez started handling cue cards for soap operas, then moved him up to the variety shows. "I used to watch 'I Love Lucy' back in Cuba, and then all of a sudden, after I met Barney, I was working with Lucille Ball on 'The Lucy Show,' " Mendez said. "Lucy only needed the beginning of her lines. Vivian Vance? She needed the whole thing written out for her."

In the mid-sixties, during the heyday of the variety show, Mendez flipped cue cards for Dean Martin ("loved him, he never rehearsed"), Milton Berle ("a control freak, but he was usually right"), and Jimmy Durante ("he needed huge cards, because he was blind as a bat"). Mendez enjoyed his work, but during this period he discovered a passion for dance, and eventually won a scholarship to American Ballet Theatre, in New York. This led to fifteen years as a Broadway dancer, with roles in "Pippin," "Irene," "Dancin'," and an international tour of "Evita." But by the time Mendez was thirty-five the lifts were getting tougher. Then his partner, Marty Zone, who did the cue cards for Letterman, contracted AIDS. "Marty was getting sicker and sicker, and I needed to stay close to home," Mendez recalled. "So my mother said, 'What about cue cards?' "

Cue cards, at this point, were nearly obsolete, having been replaced on most programs and newscasts by the teleprompter. But here and there—"Saturday Night Live," the soaps, Johnny Carson—they did things the old way. Mendez got a job at "Saturday Night Live" and remained there for nine years. "It was the most stressful job I ever had," he said. "The hosts were totally freaked out. They would all try to memorize, and I would tell them that the script was going to be changing until the last minute, so they had to follow me. Here I was—*me!*—telling people like Sean Penn what to do, but they listened."

Some, of course, did not. "Steven Segal was awful, hated everything," Mendez said. "And George Steinbrenner was so difficult. He had one sketch he liked because he got to play the piano, and I was so glad they cut it right before we went to air."

When Marty Zone became too sick to go to work, Mendez took over his job at the Letterman show. "Marty died eight years ago, two days before the show moved into this theatre," he said. "I would never have gotten through it if it wasn't for this show."

Onstage the other day at the Sullivan Theatre, near the red dot that marks Letterman's monologue post, Mendez described some trade secrets. "The flipping of the cards is very important," he said. "If you flip too fast, they can't see the last line. If you're too slow, you slow them down. You can't bump into the camera or cast a shadow. And I'm only five feet away from Dave, so I've got to have that energy." (A few weeks ago, Letterman said, "I couldn't do the show without Tony, and I wouldn't do the show without Tony.")

Every afternoon before the show, Mendez transcribes a draft of jokes for Letterman's two-thirty meeting with two of his writers, Bill Scheft and Gabe Abelson, then prepares a final batch—the monologue usually contains eight to ten jokes—shortly before the program is taped, at five-thirty. Now and then, Letterman needles Mendez on the air, calling him Inky. Mendez pretends to get angry and spews insults in rapid-fire Spanish.

"Sometimes I get carried away and

forget it's not my show," Mendez said. "Every once in a while, I'll look away all of a sudden, just to make Dave ask what I'm looking at. But I always remember that I'm in his line of vision, so I always laugh at the jokes."

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

## SOUND CHECK
### THE NEW COODER

If you are already familiar with the Los Angeles band RadioBemba, which played the other night at S.O.B.'s, then you know about the Commagere sisters, Carla and Juliette. Carla is twenty-four, and Juliette is twenty-three. Carla has blond hair, a heart-shaped face, large eyes, ruthless lips, and a svelte physique. Juliette has dark hair and dark eyes and an expression that is perhaps more cerebral and worldly. The Commagere sisters have been singing together since they were children, and their voices are by turns coy and vibrant and brassy and sultry and ethereal. It is not uncommon for bands to have a singer who resembles one of the Commagere sisters, but no other band has two.

The core of RadioBemba was formed some years ago, when Joachim Cooder, the group's drummer, was in the ninth grade and asked the Commagere sisters to sing "Funkytown" with his band for a school talent show. Juliette was his classmate. Cooder is the son of the virtuoso guitarist Ry Cooder, who made the record "Buena Vista Social Club" in Havana with a collection of elderly musicians. Joachim also plays on the record. When RadioBemba performs anywhere, Ry Cooder usually goes along, as a kind of den mother. He is especially interested in assuring that the band's signature qualities, among them the Commagere sisters, are heard to best advantage. The sound engineers in the halls and clubs, who by nature are often resistant to collaboration, don't always remember to thank him.

RadioBemba is Cuban slang for the word on the street, the gossip. The band had been brought to New York to perform for the executives of a record company interested in signing them. Carla spent the early afternoon before the show at Barneys. Afterward, she returned to the hotel suite that she was sharing with Joachim and Juliette. Juliette and Joachim sat on a couch. Joachim was eating a sandwich. Ry Cooder sat in a chair by a window. Carla held a sheer camisole in front of her.

"This is what I think I'm going to wear tonight," she said. "With a skirt? Is this good? If I don't wear it tonight, I'm going to return it, because it was really expensive." Then she held up the skirt. "It's all the same color," she said, "and then I'm so dressy. Maybe I'll wear pants."

Ry Cooder said, "What time is the sound check?"

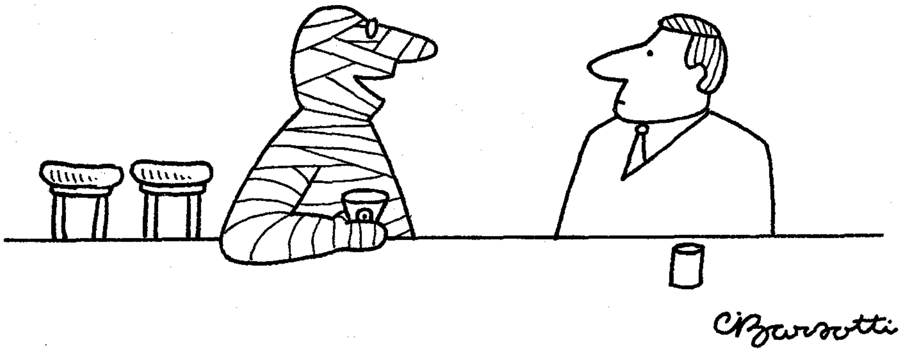
"We're all supposed to meet in the lobby at two-thirty," Joachim said, looking at his watch. "Which is now." Being a rock-and-roll musician, he did not stop eating his sandwich or rise from the couch.

At the club, a cat slept on a chair that stood on top of a table. A black-haired woman laid red tablecloths on the rest of the tables, then white plates on the cloths. Joachim began playing, and the sound man arranged his microphones, before doing the same for the bass player, Jared Smith; the saxophone player, James King; the trumpet, trombone, accordion, and keyboard player, Mike Bolger; the tres player, Russ Blake; and, finally, the Commagere sisters. While King and Bolger waited for their call, they played swing tunes on the street outside the club. Ry Cooder stood inside the club's glass doors and watched them. King played a baritone saxophone, and Bolger played the accordion. After a while, Bolger picked up a trumpet and fingered its valves with one hand while playing the accordion with the other. A thin man stopped to watch them. He appeared to be confused by the sight of two men playing three instruments. In his hands he held a clear-plastic bag, and inside the bag was a wet washcloth. He took the washcloth out of the bag and applied it like a bandage to his forehead. Then it started to rain, and the musicians went inside.

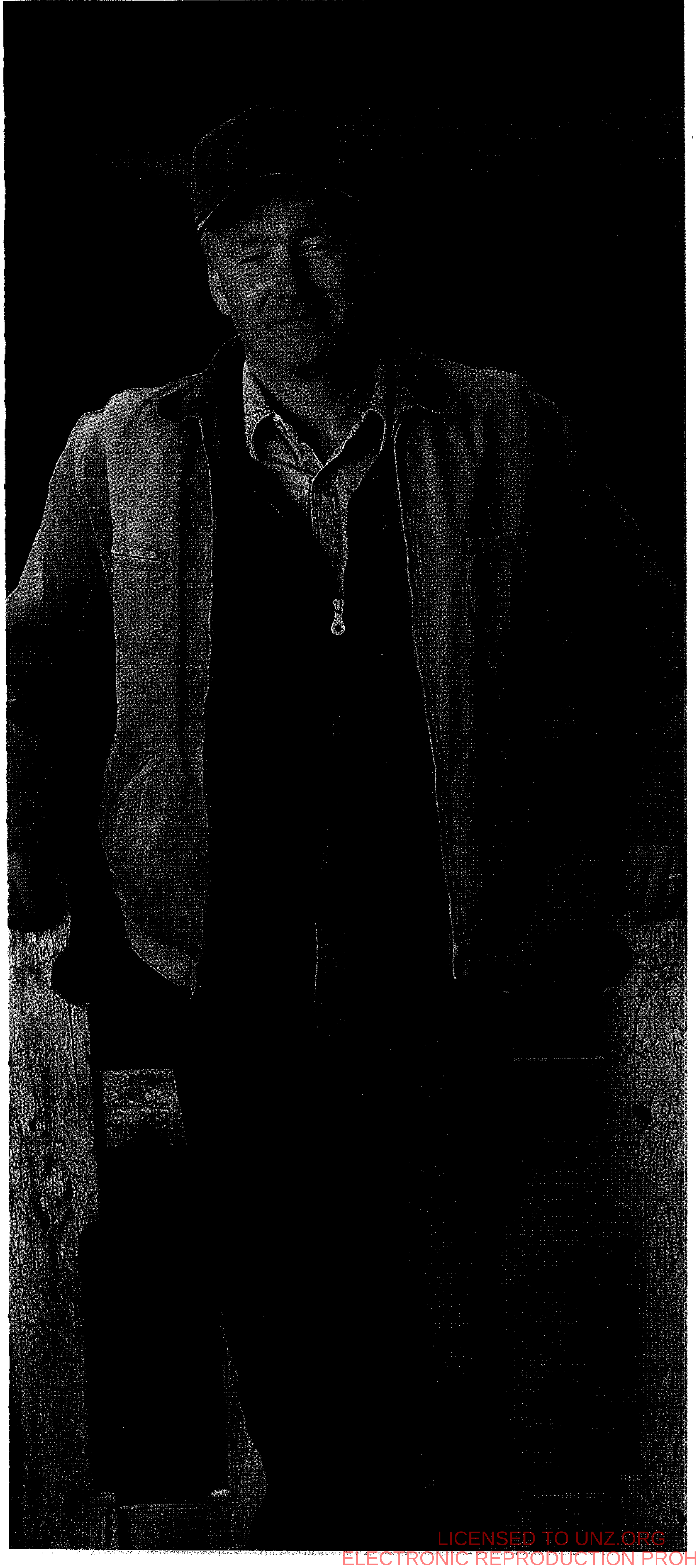
A few hours later, Carla took the stage, dressed in a black turtleneck that stopped short of her midriff and a white diaphanous skirt. Juliette, who is more reserved, wore a halter top with a floral print and white jeans and a Panama hat. Ry Cooder stood by the door of the club and said, "I told myself when I was sitting at home with my suitcases, 'This is not your show, just stand back. Keep your hands off the wheel.' I wish I was playing, though. It's a nice audience. They're discerning. They're going to get it."

The band performed eight songs from a list that Joachim had written on a yellow legal pad with a black Magic Marker. The Commagere sisters sang seven of them in Spanish and one in English. They danced in a way that was both suggestive and innocent. They sang expressively. The crowd embraced them. Afterward, Ry Cooder smiled broadly and congratulated everyone. "Thank God that's over," he said. "I can retire now. Open my laundromat. Four machines broken, and a sign on the door saying 'Closed for the moment.'"

—*Alec Wilkinson*



*"All I can say is thank God for the patients' bill of rights."*



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## THE FINANCIAL PAGE
# LET THE BAD TIMES ROLL

Near the end of one of the biggest economic booms of the twentieth century, a new weekly business magazine appeared on newsstands across America. Its editors promised readers a "clear, critical, realistic, and rational" look at a business world in which "new industries rise like rockets, and old ones grow tired and die." Though they were thrilled by the changes wrought by the boom, they were skeptical of its excesses—"the apocalyptic, holy-rolling exaltation over the unparalleled prosperity of the 'new era.'" But that prosperity dried up rather sooner than the editors had expected. The stock market crashed, and the magazine grew thin. So much for the "new era."

Sounds a bit like the story of *The Industry Standard*, the weekly New Economy bellwether that recently shut down and announced plans to declare bankruptcy. But it's actually the story of *Business Week*—or *The Business Week*, as it was called when it was founded, in September, 1929, six weeks before the Great Crash. *Business Week* was supposed to be to the Jazz Age what *The Standard* would be to the Information Age: a weekly filter that would give the busy young executive all the news he needed. But, while *The Standard* had two boom-time years in which to feast on the ad budgets of cash-flush startups, *Business Week* had about a month. At the time, this must have seemed like terrible luck. Yet the magazine did just fine. Though it didn't enjoy early fat years, as *The Standard* did, four years after its founding it had become required reading for corporate vice-presidents from Omaha to Oneida.

The same went for *Fortune*, which made its début in February of 1930, four months after the Crash. If *Business Week* was the magazine for the harried middle manager, *Fortune* was the one for the man at the top. Its slogan was "For Those Whose Stake in This Industrial Civilization Is Greatest." It cost a dollar an issue, when magazines cost a quarter, and initially was available only by subscription. In many ways, *Fortune* was a high-end life-style magazine—the *W* of its time—filled with ads for jackal-hunting trips to India and features like "A Note on the Servant Problem." But it was also a real business magazine. Hog farming, auto manufacturing, liquor smuggling, J. Pierpont Morgan: whether the subject was glamorous or mundane, *Fortune* was lavish with its attention, essentially inventing business feature journalism as we know it. With full-page high-contrast photographs (many by Margaret Bourke-White), it was also the first magazine to capture the visual poetry of industrial civilization, much as *Wired* did for digital culture sixty years later. Despite the Depression, *Fortune's* issues in 1933 were thick with ads. The following year, it turned profitable, and by the end of the decade its circulation was nine times as great as it had been in 1930.

*Fortune's* success in the face of the worst economy in American history has been called "one of the miracles of American publishing." But there was nothing unusual about it—or about *Business Week's* success, either. One of the first great general-interest magazines, *McClure's*, was founded in 1893, just as the U.S. economy was plunging into a severe depression. *Newsweek*, *Life*, and *Esquire* made their débuts in the nineteen-thirties. *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated* hit the stands during the first Eisenhower recession, and *People* arrived during the stagflation days of 1974. There are exceptions, including *The New Yorker*. But history suggests that for new magazines hard times are good times.

And not just for magazines. Despite all the bellyaching that accompanies a capital crunch, lean years are good for new companies, too. Procter & Gamble opened its doors, back in 1837, during a major financial panic, and American stalwarts like 3M, General Motors, Chase, Bell Telephone, I.B.M., Texas Instruments, General Electric, Microsoft, and Sun Microsystems all got their starts during times of recession. In Japan, Sony and Honda were founded amid the rubble of the Second World War.

On the face of it, this makes little sense. During a boom, it's easier to raise money and easier to sell products. You'd think that would be a good thing if you were trying to start a business. The problem is that everyone else thinks so, too; when the economy is hot, everyone's an entrepreneur. The more companies there are, the less likely it is that one of them will be able to sustain a lasting competitive advantage, no matter how flush the marketplace is. Starting a business is like investing in stock: you want to buy low and sell high. Launching a company in the middle of a boom is the equivalent of buying JDS Uniphase at a hundred and fifty dollars a share. It could go higher, but the smart bet says it won't.

What's more, the easier it is for startups to raise and make money, the harder they find it to manage that money wisely. Companies need discipline—an ingrained sense of the relationship between effort and reward, product and profit. That's where a nice, brutal slowdown can come in handy. You might say that *Fortune* and *Business Week* succeeded because of the Depression, not in spite of it. It prevented them from overexpanding and overreaching, as *The Industry Standard* did.

Companies are like human beings: hardscrabble beginnings beget hard-minded men. Consider little Andrew Carnegie, toiling as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory, or the young John D. Rockefeller, tending turkeys and salting away copper coins. Or think of any number of today's moguls whose humble upbringing you can read about in the pages of *Business Week* and *Fortune*—but not, alas, in the pages of *The Industry Standard*.

—*James Surowiecki*

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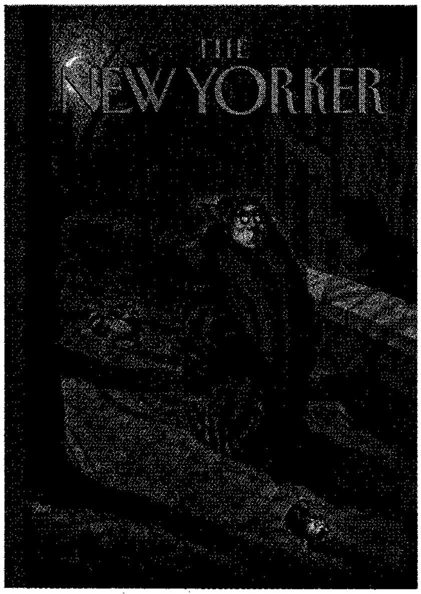

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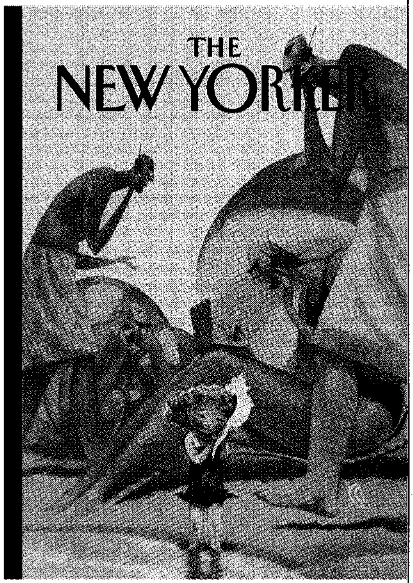

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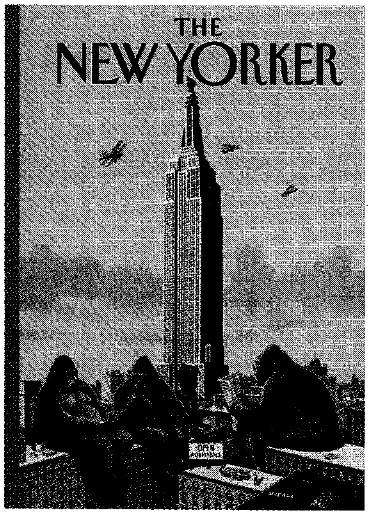

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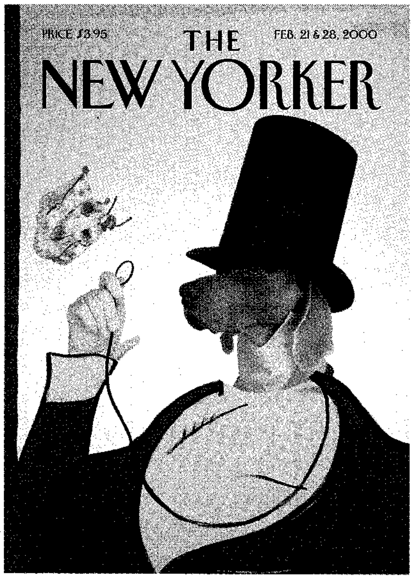

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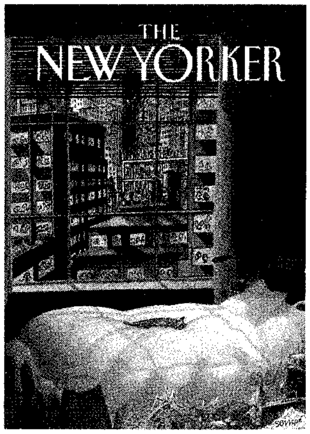

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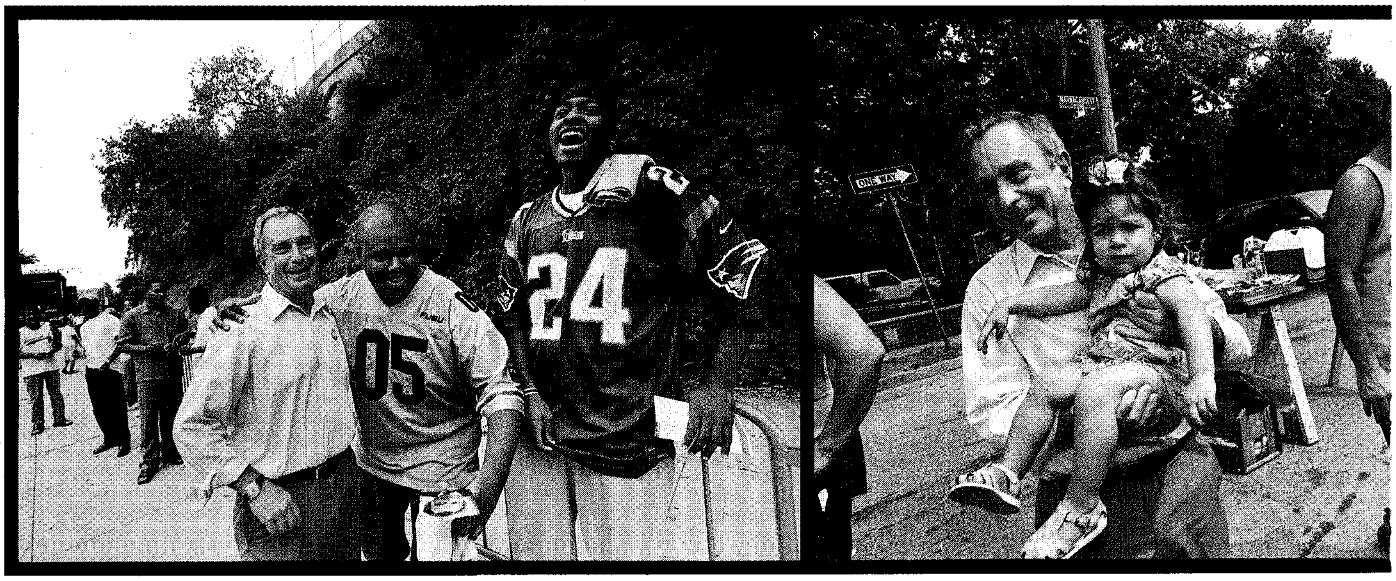
AROUND CITY HALL

# BIG TICKET ITEM

*Why does Mike Bloomberg want to be mayor?*

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Enormous wealth, Michael Bloomberg has discovered, can raise some pretty heavy issues. A lot of people may not realize this, but that, of course, is because they themselves are not enormously wealthy. Once you "make a fortune, the real question is: what's it for?" Bloomberg observes in "Bloomberg by Bloomberg," his autobiography. "That sounds ridiculous to the average 'working stiff' daydreaming about the lottery. But after you've accumulated a certain amount of wealth you've got a serious problem. You can only eat so many meals, have so much domestic help, travel to so many places, live in so many rooms. You can only sleep in one bed at a time."



*Bloomberg at a Dominican festival in Washington Heights, a block party in the Bronx, and an Ecuadoran festival in Queens. He h*

Bloomberg, who is fifty-nine, is short and trim, with gray hair and reddish eyebrows. He favors French cuffs and tasselled loafers and speaks with a strong Boston accent. Until recently, when he resigned the chairmanship, he was both the chairman and the C.E.O. of Bloomberg L.P., the business-media empire that he founded, and before that he was a star equity trader at Salomon Brothers. Before that, he was president of Phi Kappa Psi at Johns Hopkins, and he retains some of the hopeful swagger of a frat boy on the make. When Bloomberg first proposed running for office, many of his friends and associates advised him against it, but he apparently was unfazed. At a meeting last year, he summed up his attitude toward electoral politics, and risktaking in general, by telling an off-color joke. "I get slapped a lot, but I get laid a lot, too" was the punch line. When New York holds its mayoral primaries, on September 11th, Bloomberg will almost certainly become the Republican nominee.

This year's mayoral campaign is the first in more than a quarter of a century that doesn't include the incumbent, and just about everybody else who could plausibly enter the race has. The four candidates for the Democratic nomination—Mark Green, Alan Hevesi, Peter Vallone, and Fernando Ferrer—all occupy prominent city posts, and any one of them would be a logical, if not exactly compelling, choice. Together, they have nearly a hundred years of experience in local government. Bloomberg's justification for jumping into the race is that this sort of experience is exactly what no one needs. "Going back to politics as usual in New York City is crazy," he declared in his inaugural ad.

Whatever force there is to Bloomberg's argument comes mostly from the number of times it has been—and will be—reiterated. He did not declare his candidacy till June, yet managed in his first two months in the race to buy nearly twice as much advertising as all his rivals combined. Already, he has waged the most expensive primary campaign in the city's history, and he will probably break the record for the general election as well. (Given his fortune, estimated at four billion dollars, this is something he could do without ever really noticing.)

It is hard to work up much outrage over yet another gazillionaire trying to buy an election. (According to his friends, Bloomberg paid close attention last year as Jon Corzine, the former co-chairman of Goldman, Sachs, spent sixty-three million dollars to become the junior senator from New Jersey.) And, as "self-financing" candidates go, Bloomberg appears harmless enough—not paranoid, or flaky, or even especially autocratic. He often says that he likes people and, when you think about it, from his perspective what's not to like? Still, the process can be embarrassing to watch. "The world today is hardly perfect," he acknowledged at a campaign stop recently, reflecting on the progress of social justice. "But when I was born my father didn't know anybody that went to an Ivy League school."

One evening a few weeks ago, the Women's National Republican Club, on West Fifty-first Street, invited its members to a cocktail reception with Bloomberg as the featured guest. Bloomberg does not have a stump speech, preferring instead to talk about his experiences on the campaign trail. That morning, he had gone out to Brooklyn to work a subway stop. "The most fascinating thing is you sort of have to decide when to stick your hand out and when not to," he told the Republican women.

The business of getting on the ballot, too, was fascinating, he noted a little later. "You have these people who go out to all five boroughs, take a petition, ring doorbells, make phone calls, get appointments, or stop people on the street to try to get them to join the great American process of picking its leaders." And New York itself is not what you might expect: "That's the other thing that has just amazed me as I've gone around the city. Forty per cent of New York City is foreign-born. That's not someone that comes from outside New York City; those are people that come from outside the United States!"

The Women's National Republican Club is the sort of crowd that Rudy Giuliani never failed to please. Last year, I heard the Mayor address the group in the midst of his abortive race for the U.S. Senate, and when he laced into his critics—confused liberals whose guilt prevented them from thinking straight—the joy in the room was palpable. Bloomberg doesn't go in for liberal-bashing. "Are there people in this city that need our help?" he asked the women in cocktail dresses. "Absolutely. That's what makes New York different. We are a compassionate society. We pay the highest taxes in the world, or in the United States, certainly, and I don't think anybody really objects so much to paying taxes." At that point, his audience booed.

Bloomberg changed his party registration just last year, at the last possible moment allowed by New York election law. Until then, the Democratic Party was, along with the Central Park Conservancy and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Johns Hopkins University, one of the many recipients of his largesse. He made the switch without fanfare and with no pretense of having experienced a change of heart; evidently, he just decided that the Democratic primary was too crowded.

The city's Republican leadership, such as it is, has been no less pragmatic. Bloomberg's sole opponent in the Republican primary is Herman Badillo, the former congressman, who is seventy-two. Once among Giuliani's most loyal supporters, Badillo has been so utterly abandoned by his old allies, including the Mayor, that he has yet to qualify for city matching funds. "Bloomberg's a trouper," Guy Molinari, the Staten Island borough president, told me. "I frankly am amazed

*utspent his primary opponent by nearly seventy to one. Photographs by Harry Benson.*

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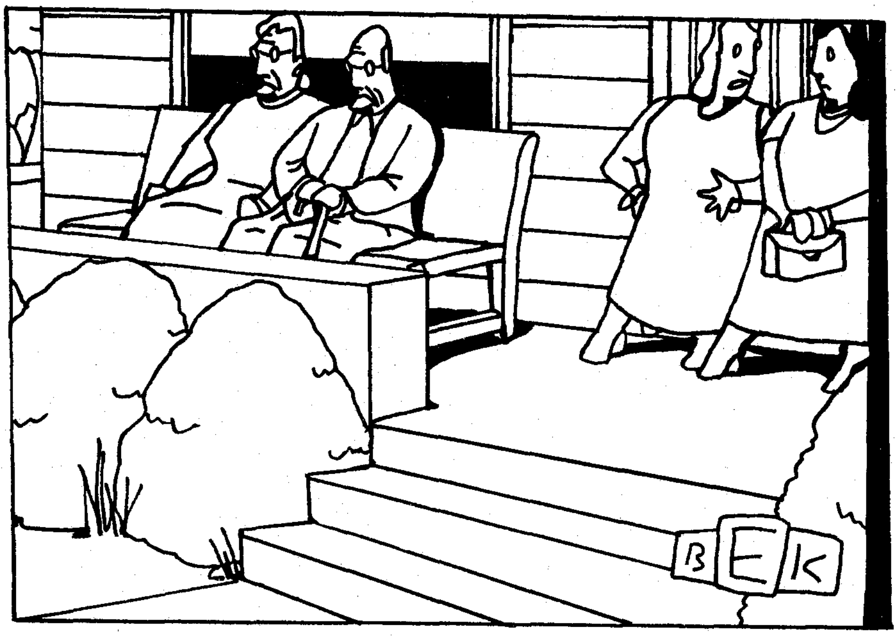


*"They don't have the secrets to anything—they're just old."*

that he has made the strides that he has so far." Badillo, whom Bloomberg has outspent by a ratio of nearly seventy to one, has been somewhat less generous. "It shows total contempt for the people of the city," he said of his opponent's campaign. "It soils the hands of anybody who would even think of voting for that man."

To bring himself up to speed on the issues, Bloomberg has hired a small army of pollsters, consultants, and academics—many of them Democrats—who have drafted a set of blandly think-tanky position papers. The centerpiece of his paper on transit, for example, is a proposal to name a single person to coördinate city transportation policy. The parks paper calls for, above all else, maintaining city parks. Bloomberg favors improving police-community relations, demanding more accountability from the public-school bureaucracy, and procuring more resources from Albany. When, a few weeks ago, Bloomberg delivered his parks paper, a reporter asked him how his plans differed from those of his Democratic rivals. He replied, "I don't know; I don't read them." Recently, he accused Mark Green of stealing his ideas on education. Green pointed out that he had announced his education proposals several weeks before Bloomberg had even become a candidate.

After the boos, the Republican women composed themselves. Bloomberg barely seemed to register their disapproval. He is a great believer in the power of positive thinking, as he explained to them: "I have not a lot of sympathy for people who always find what's wrong. I think that we can make a difference, guys, and we can make a difference if everybody in this room and everybody in this city works together and tries to look at the glass as half full. And then you will make it better, and things will be self-fulfilling." After Bloomberg left, a thirty-something lawyer sought me out to give me her impression of his performance. "It was really frightening," she said.

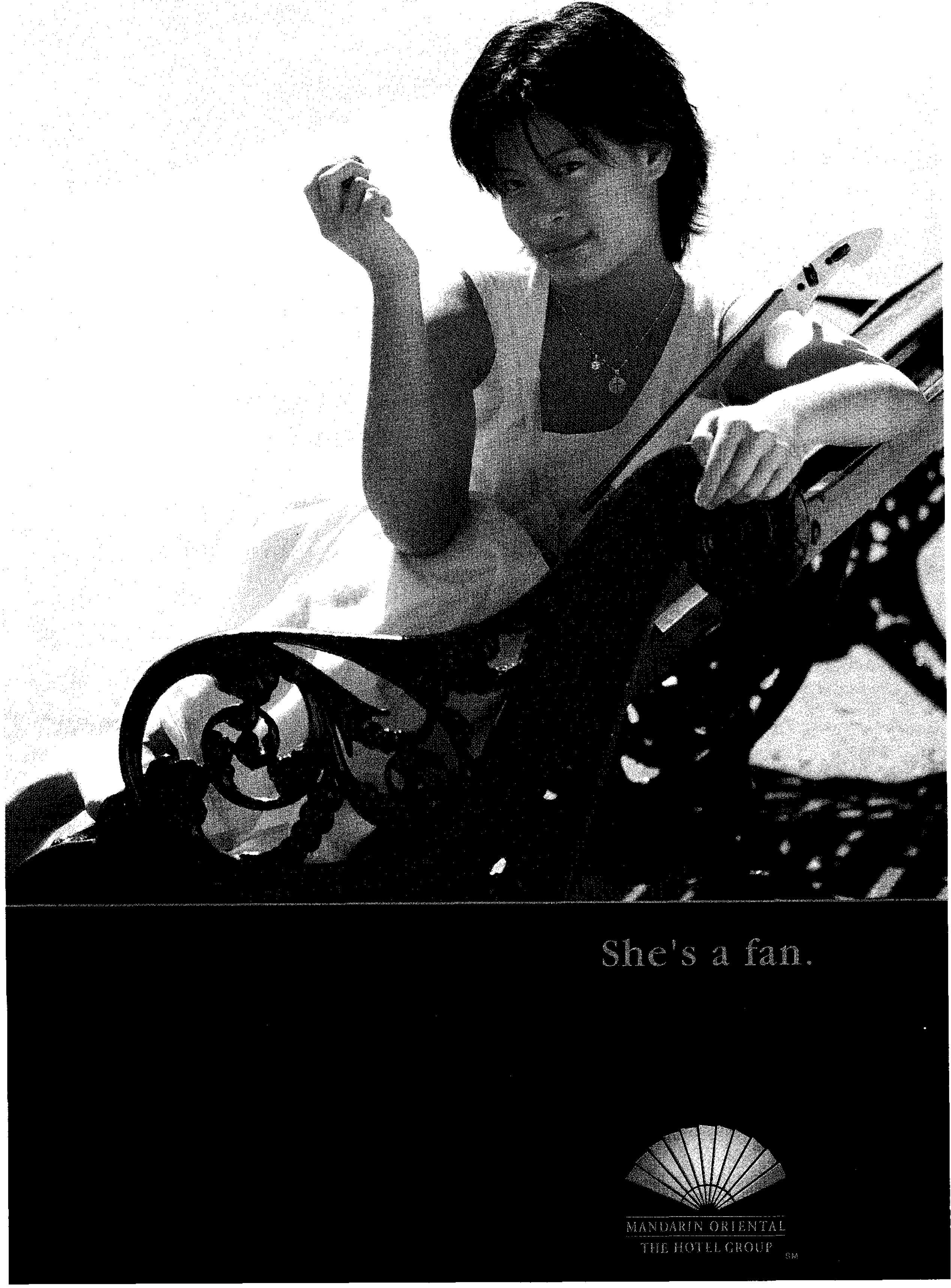
The Bloomberg biography is a rags-to-riches story for the new millennium: it doesn't begin with rags, and shoots well past riches. Bloomberg grew up in Medford, Massachusetts, where his father was a bookkeeper. In high school, he was an Eagle Scout, and after graduating he attended Johns Hopkins. Bloomberg's mother, Charlotte, is ninety-two and still lives in the two-story Colonial that the family bought in 1946. According to her son, she doesn't like to acknowledge that she's related to him, because, when she does, people pester her about getting their grandchildren jobs.

Bloomberg went to work for Salomon Brothers right out of Harvard Business School, in 1966. His first job for the firm entailed standing in a sweltering vault in his underwear, counting out stock certificates. He advanced the old-fashioned way—by working hard and sucking up. Bloomberg used to get to the office before everyone except the managing partner, Billy Salomon, and stay later than everyone but the second-in-command, John Gutfreund. By the time he was thirty, he was a general partner. "I didn't love Wall Street just for the money—I also loved it for the life style it provided," he once observed.

Even in a world where aggressive self-promotion is the norm, Bloomberg stood out, and in 1981, when Salomon Brothers was bought, his rivals got together and forced him out of the firm. (When one old enemy died in a plane crash a few years later, Bloomberg was, as he notes in his autobiography, not exactly grief-stricken.) His stake in Salomon was worth ten million dollars, and with his payout he launched Bloomberg L.P. Creating the company from scratch was obviously a demanding job, and for Bloomberg that in many ways appears to have been the appeal of it. He describes his ideal workday as one so overscheduled that he barely has a moment to himself. The company's major source of revenue is financial data; a hundred and sixty thousand subscribers pay $1,285 a month to get real-time prices for stocks, bonds, commodities, and currencies, as well as historical information and financial news. Bloomberg's stake in Bloomberg L.P., which is privately held, is seventy-two per cent.

Bloomberg's money has allowed him to do pretty much whatever he wants, and, at least until now, what he has wanted to do has been lavish along conventional lines. He likes to play golf, to fly planes, to date attractive women—he is divorced—and to throw spectacular parties. (I've attended two that were aimed at the press; one had acrobatic dancers and a circus theme, and the other featured a woman in a mermaid suit sitting in a bed of oysters.) He owns a Park Avenue apartment, an estate in Westchester County, and a condominium in Vail, and he's building a house in Bermuda. He is a member of half a dozen exclusive clubs, and until recently he was a member of four more, from which he felt obliged to resign, owing to their too exclusive membership policies.

He also likes to give money away. In



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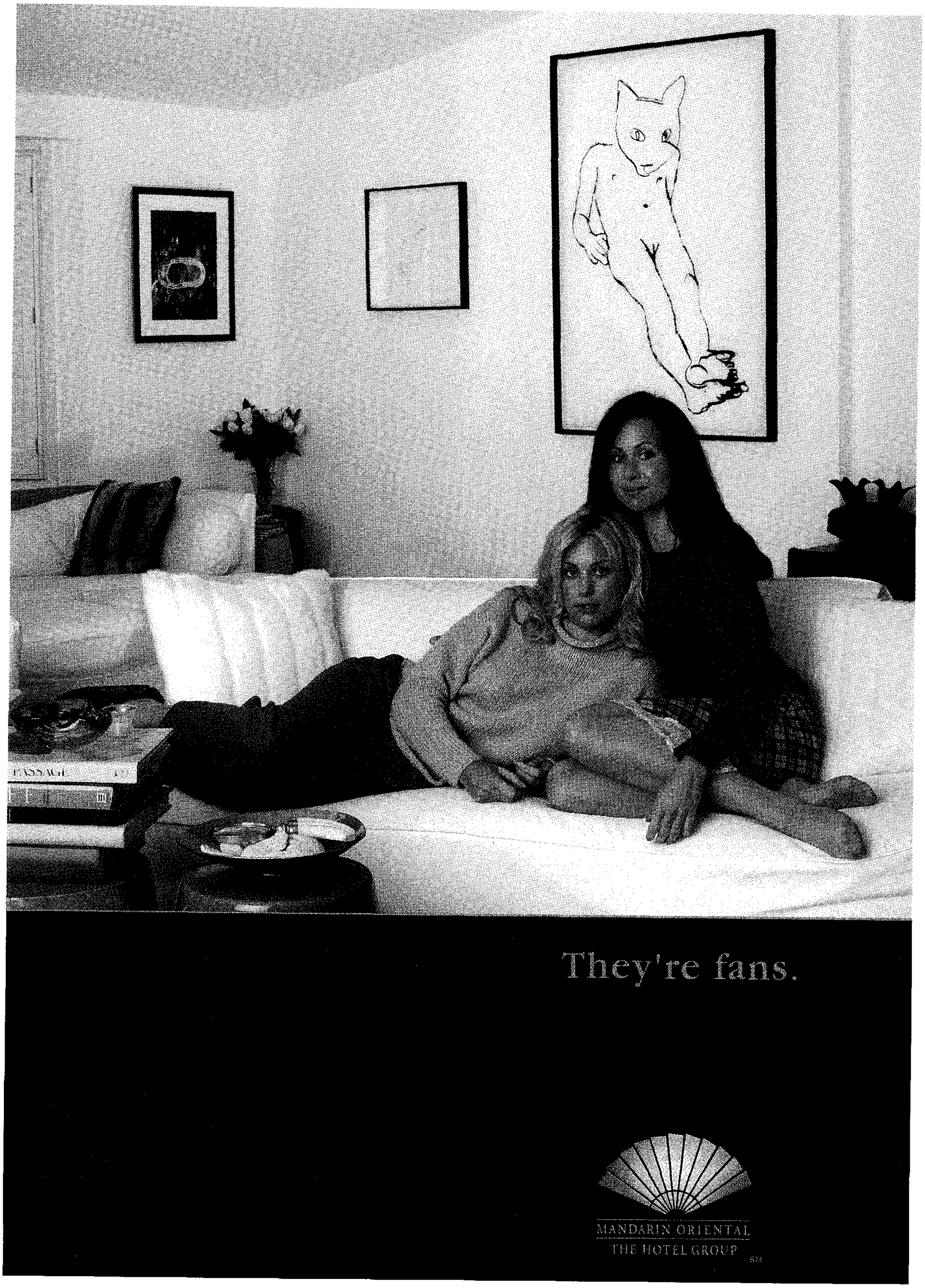
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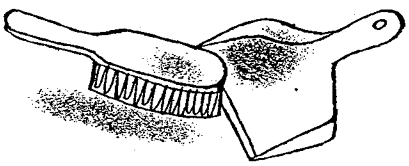
the city's philanthropic circles, he has acquired the reputation, as one knowledgeable observer put it, of being "a good sport." After Bob Tisch, the co-chairman of the Loews Corporation, started a group to renovate ball fields at city schools, one of the first people he went to see was Bloomberg, who wrote out a half-million-dollar check. Beverly Sills, the chairman of Lincoln Center, told me that she has only to mention a concern and a few days later she will get a call saying that Bloomberg, a member of the center's board of trustees, has made a gift to the relevant charity. All in all, last year he contributed a total of a hundred million dollars to some six hundred groups.

Not surprisingly, Bloomberg's campaign biography skips over the houses and the clubs and the supermodels and makes much of his philanthropy. One twelve-page, full-color brochure pictures him in a T-shirt, painting a public school, and in a business suit, reading kids a story. "Giving back isn't a political stunt," the brochure declares. "For Mike Bloomberg, it's in his blood." On the campaign Web site, Mikeformayor.com, the candidate's altruism is traced all the way back to his childhood. Bloomberg's father, William, it notes, "never earned more than $13,500 a year" but "always seemed to find enough to write a check to the NAACP." (Just a few years ago, Bloomberg claimed that his father never earned more than six thousand dollars a year.)

As it happens, Bloomberg is running for mayor in the first election to be held under the city's new campaign-finance laws. The laws—some of the strictest and most comprehensive in the nation—were intended to have two effects: to reduce the influence of big contributors and to insure that any candidate with a reasonable amount of support could mount a credible campaign. The city matches private contributions at a rate of four to one, and it puts a cap on total expenditures for those who participate. One of the reasons it is so tough to predict the outcome of the Democratic primary is that, thanks to the new laws, the four candidates have all had roughly the same amount to spend on the race.



Bloomberg's extravagance obviously undermines the laws, and is thus apt to be condemned by anyone who supports them. This logic is not complicated, yet Bloomberg seems, on some level, genuinely mystified by it. At a party a few months ago, he ran into the publisher of the *Times*, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., and asked whether the *Times* would endorse him. Sulzberger replied that he was sure the paper would consider doing so, provided, of course, that Bloomberg didn't use his own money. According to another guest, Bloomberg appeared surprised to hear this. Out on the trail, he often compares himself to Senator John McCain, apparently oblivious of the fact that McCain has spent the past several years crusading for campaign-finance reform.

Incomprehension, as a rule, resists explanation, but Bloomberg's seems to be rooted more in an idiosyncratic conception of philanthropy than in an unusually cynical view of politics. Long before he ran for mayor, or became a major donor, he was the king of the self-promotional freebie, giving away just about any gift item or gizmo that could be stamped, embossed, or embroidered with his name. (I myself own a Bloomberg mug, a Bloomberg towel, a pocket-size Bloomberg flashlight, a couple of tins of "Bloomberg invest-mints," and a scented candle in a little Bloomberg cannister.) In "Bloomberg by Bloomberg," Bloomberg recounts at length the joys of giving, which, in his description, come across as almost indistinguishable from the joys of getting.

"If we make the gifts (or at least the commitments) when we're still around, we can get the greatest satisfaction available for cash today," he writes. "Having our names on a plaque, on a scholarship, on a research grant . . . rewards us as long as we live. It puts everyone else—our entire community, our country, and even the whole world—in our debt. What greater satisfaction could we possibly get than watching ourselves do great things for humanity?"

On a record-breakingly hot afternoon, I went to visit Bloomberg at his campaign office, on East Fifty-sixth Street. The office is not far from the headquarters of Bloomberg L.P., and, like the headquarters, it has what Bloomberg calls an "open plan," which means that everyone, including the candidate,

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sits at a little carrel. Also like the headquarters, the Bloomberg for Mayor office provides an elaborate selection of free food, including candy and fruit and soup and make-your-own-tuna-salad kits that come with a small plastic bowl.

I met with Bloomberg in a conference room lined with color-coded maps of the five boroughs—red for neighborhoods that four years ago voted for Giuliani, blue for those that went for his Democratic opponent, Ruth Messinger. Bloomberg was wearing a black pin-striped suit, a monogrammed white shirt, gold knot cufflinks, and a blue tie. I started by asking when it had occurred to him to run for mayor.

“I think it all came out of when I wrote my book,” he said, referring to his autobiography, published in 1997. “I was trying to describe what I thought were my own strengths and weaknesses. And I said that, in government, I would not be interested in the legislature, because the time frames are so long and there’s no accountability. On the other hand, the executive branch of government is exactly the kind of thing that I’m good at, and I said that means President, governor, or mayor. Then somebody said, ‘Oh, he’s running for mayor,’ and my sister called and said, ‘Isn’t it insulting?’ And I said, ‘Isn’t what insulting?’ And she said, ‘Well, they just assume you’re running for mayor, rather than President.’ ”

A little later, I asked him what had most surprised him about campaigning. He answered that it was the news coverage. The three months he has been in the race have been marked by a number of what the press has described as “gaffes.” In one case, Bloomberg suggested that taxis should be counted as a form of public transportation; in another, he said that public-school children ought to recite the Lord’s Prayer. In yet another, he declared that the really dangerous work in the city was done not by its police but by its garbagemen.

“I don’t know whether it’s just that they’re not all that smart, or maybe they just don’t think it sells,” he said of the city’s political reporters, some of whom he singled out by name. “But there is a focus on finding something wrong. I’ve said, ‘What you say is a gaffe, I say is telling the truth.’ Now, I think that, in the end, that’s what will get me elected. I think that’s exactly why people rallied around John McCain. They thought that McCain wasn’t a career politician; McCain told it like it was. And, if I’m right, I will run away with the election.”

I rephrased the question, and asked what he had learned so far about the city. “The glass is more than half full; that’s what I’ve seen,” he said. “You go to neighborhoods where you would think that the recognition of me, and the warmth, would be less than in others. I don’t know if they’re going to vote for me, but, boy, they could not be nicer.”

Bloomberg told me that the first thing he would do as mayor is “to go to all five boroughs and say thank you.” He said that the fact that he was running as a Republican didn’t mean he had “anything in common with the more conservative people in Washington,” and he repeated the dictum of Fiorello La-Guardia that there is “no Republican or Democratic way to pick up garbage.” Eventually, I raised the money question. Bloomberg pooh-poohed the effectiveness of the city’s campaign-finance laws. “The real-estate industry gives to all four Democratic candidates not because it’s altruistic—let’s get serious here,” he said. “The intent of the city campaign-finance reform was to get rid of, quote, special interests. I think in a practical sense you probably cannot.”

He continued, “There’s no argument in my case that there are special interests; I’m purer than the driven snow.” Still, some people might feel that, if everyone can’t finance his own campaign, “it shouldn’t be done,” he acknowledged. “But by that argument Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., should live in a housing project. Last I checked, he wasn’t against capitalism as long as he was above average.”

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On another steamy afternoon, I met up with Bloomberg on Narragansett Avenue, in the Bronx. A block party was in progress, and at one end of the street there was a big, inflatable slide and at the other a dunk tank. Tables had been set up in the driveways, and the adults were grilling sausages and eating lasagna while the kids doused each other with water.

Whenever Bloomberg campaigns on the street, he comes in for a certain amount of ribbing. “We’re looking for someone to sponsor next year’s block party,” one of the event’s organizers announced by way of a greeting. Bloomberg picked up a baby, and its mother jokingly called out to her other children, “Kids, come on! You’ve got a new dad!” At the same time, the crowd—all white, and mostly Italian—was clearly flattered to have a billionaire on the block, in the middle of the afternoon, drinking beer out of a plastic cup. At one driveway, he sat down to have a hot dog with a retired policeman. “I like the way he talks,” the policeman told me. “I watch Bloomberg television. I know what he is; I know what he represents. He doesn’t have to do this. If he does it, it has to be because he feels he can make a difference.” It wasn’t clear whether Bloomberg had heard this praise. In any case, he launched into a long and, under the circumstances, strangely abstracted account of what life in New York is really like.

“Just take a look at this neighborhood,” he said. “What people forget is the city’s eight million people who are basically nice people. If you read the tabloid press, you think that everybody’s a Gary Condit or a serial axe murderer or something, and that’s not true. A lot of people in this city, life for them is infinitely better than where they came from. Forty per cent are foreign-born!”

This elicited no response, and Bloomberg continued, "You can always find something wrong. One of my pet peeves are these metal shutters over the stores. It makes it look like a war zone. The cops and the firemen can't see what's behind, so it's dangerous. No light can come through. They're covered with graffiti, and it's terrible. So I said one of the things I'd really focus on is trying to get open grilles and have a store leave the light on and you put some trees out. Then people would come on the street, crime would go down, commerce would go up, property would become more valuable. So a reporter said, 'Is it fair to say some neighborhoods look like war zones?' I said, 'Miss, they do! Let's do something about it.' There are people who just want to complain, and I don't ever want to go home and look in the mirror and say I just complained."

In the course of an hour at the block party, Bloomberg met, in addition to the retired cop, several other people who worked for the city. In all these encounters, he was friendly and garrulous, and, in his own mogulish way, almost self-deprecating. "I've been more successful in business than anybody has a right," he said at one point. "I'm a happy person. I've got my health, my mother's still chugging along." He made no pretense, however, à la Hillary Clinton's famous "listening tour," of being interested in the parochial concerns of the people he was introduced to, unless you count an inquiry that he made of a student at the Police Academy about the bar that was sponsoring the local softball team. ("Do they give you something to drink or just shirts?")

The odds against Bloomberg are steep; he has never held elective office, has no obvious constituency or organizational support, and, if not actually a Republican, is nonetheless running as one in a city where Democrats hold a five-to-one advantage. He may have shelled out a lot of money—$16 million, or roughly a hundred and fifty dollars for each likely Republican primary voter—but he has yet to come up with an account of his candidacy that gives it any rationale beyond his money. Bloomberg describes himself, and is described by others, as almost impossibly driven; several people who know him told me that they thought he was running for mayor simply because the race represents a challenge at a time when there aren't many left for him. Yet on the campaign trail he gives the impression of someone just breezing along—upbeat, but also strangely offhand. He is constantly being asked why he wants the mayor's job, and almost as often he points out that he doesn't need it.

Still, it doesn't necessarily follow that he has no chance. When I asked former Mayor Ed Koch whether he thought Bloomberg could win, he told me that he'd been asked the same question last year by Bloomberg himself when the two had lunch together, at the Four Seasons. Koch said he had told him that, quite frankly, he didn't think he could. Then, about six months later, the two had lunch again; this time, Koch, who is backing Peter Vallone, told Bloomberg that he had changed his mind. I asked Koch what had happened. He said, "I saw the guys he was running against."

All four of the Democratic candidates are perfectly credible—Green is already the city's public advocate, Hevesi the comptroller, Vallone the city-council speaker, and Ferrer the Bronx borough president. But none could be described as a forceful personality, or, with the possible exception of Green, even as particularly colorful. Three out of the four have run for higher office before, unsuccessfully. Bloomberg likes to suggest, with no apparent self-consciousness, that he alone has enough charisma for the job. "Koch was bigger than life," he said at the block party. "People in New York want that. Why do I have a chance? Because they want somebody like that."

Bloomberg insists that the reason he delayed getting into the race had nothing to do with whether or not he could win. Rather, what concerned him was his ability to govern. The afternoon I interviewed him, I asked him how this concern had been resolved. He said, "I read a number of books on Lindsay and Koch and the city generally and public-policy kinds of things, and I eventually decided that, yeah, I really could be a great mayor."

A little later, Bloomberg told me that he had got into the race because "I want to make a difference," which is the same thing I had heard him say to at least half a dozen other people. This time, he paused briefly, as if to ask himself what this formula really meant. "You can argue that that's being selfish, that you're doing it because you get pleasure out of it," he said. "Well, sure, Mother Teresa got pleasure out of helping." ♦

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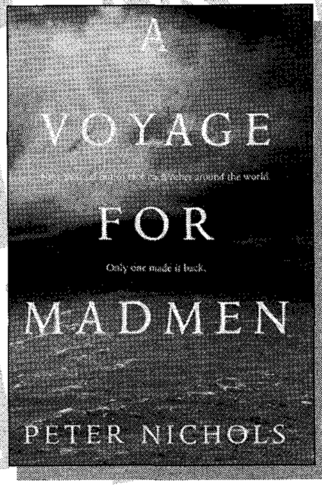

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*How far do you have to go to find hidden food treasure in New York?*

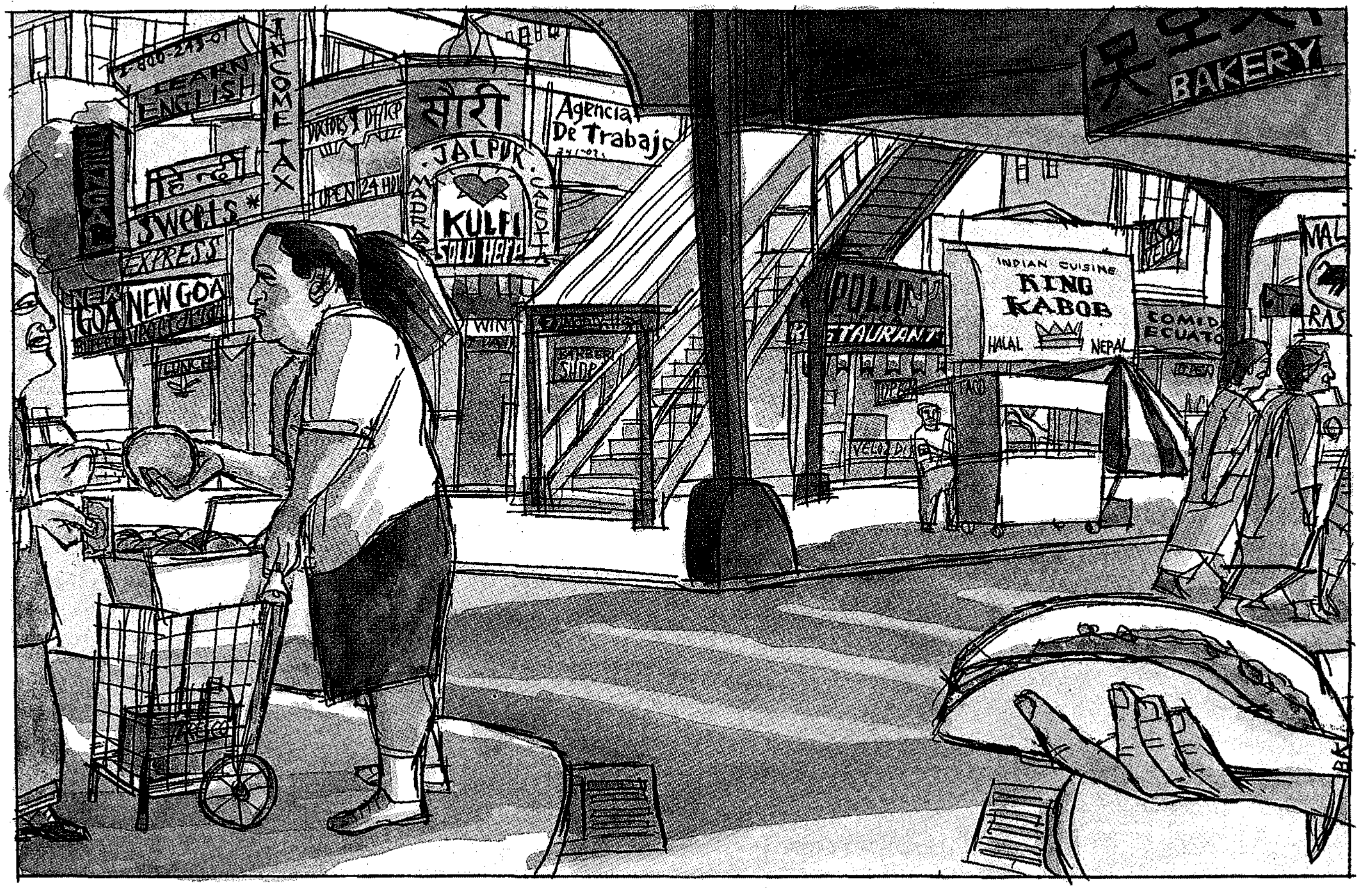
BY CALVIN TRILLIN

In Chinatown not long ago, on the corner of East Broadway and Forsyth Street, a sandwich that I bought from a street vender started me wondering whether I could consider myself a chowhound. Did I, that is, conform to the standards of the breed set forth by a Web site called chowhound.com, which describes its devotees as people who "blaze trails, combing gleefully through neighborhoods for hidden culinary treasure," people who "spurn trends and established opinion and sniff out secret deliciousness on their own"? The sandwich did possess deliciousness, and you could say that it kept at least one secret even from me: since the vender didn't speak English, I wasn't able to figure out precisely what was in it. Chowhoundishly (on the Web site, the word can be morphed into just about any part of speech), I do regularly comb through at least one neighborhood, Chinatown—two, if you count the neighborhood I live in, Greenwich Village, which is only a short bike ride away. I've always spent a certain amount of time in such wanderings, most of it with my mouth full. It should be said that when I began my visits to Chinatown, forty years ago, there wasn't much to buy from a street vender, unless your craving was for firecrackers. At that time, Chinatown was a small island below Little Italy—a small island that seemed to be getting smaller, as if it were being eroded by the constant lapping of olive oil and Chianti at its borders.

Chinatown then had only a single, small dim-sum parlor and not many other restaurants whose menus varied significantly from the sort of Americanized fare being served by descendants of Chinese railroad workers in Denver or Chinese fruit pickers in Sacramento; what was available was mostly the Chinese equivalent of the red sauce and pasta that defined Italian restaurants in the years before most New Yorkers had heard the word "trattoria." At one of the more culinarily advanced places we frequented in Chinatown, what we considered a particularly exotic dish was, upon reflection, exotic mainly for the way it was listed on the menu: Shredded Three Kinds Meat.

This was prior to the Immigration Act of 1965, in the years when this country's immigration policy, based on a system of national quotas, reflected not simply bigotry but the sort of bigotry that seemed to equate desirable stock with blandness in cooking. The quota for the United Kingdom was so high that it was never filled. Asians were, in effect, excluded. Thirty-second Street, a couple of blocks from Herald Square, hadn't begun to resemble a bustling commercial street in Seoul. Carroll Gardens did not yet offer its residents a choice of Yemeni cafés. Travellers to Coney Island expected to find Nathan's hot dogs but not Azerbaijani *kufta-bozbash*. Although I am perfectly aware that only a person lacking in sensitivity would compare the problem of living in a place that offered a narrow range of truly interesting restaurants with the problem of involuntary servitude, I have to say that some serious eaters think of the Immigration Act of 1965 as their very own Emancipation Proclamation.

Once the effects of the 1965 changes began to kick in, a burgeoning Chinatown swallowed great chunks of what had been Little Italy. We eventually had a profusion of not just Peking duck but duck tongues and deboned duck feet with jellyfish. These days, I find that I can eat splendidly in Chinatown without leaving my bike. On Mott Street—before crossing Canal, which was once Chinatown's uptown border—I often stop at a take-out window on what has become a terrifically busy market block. There I buy a huge vegetable steamed bun, which I tend to polish off on the spot. A few yards closer to Canal, I sometimes pick up some fish balls from a woman who sells them from a large plastic bag right at the curb. Most of her customers presumably take them home and put them in soup. As I shoulder my way through the crowds, I pop them in my mouth, like jujubes.



*The chowhounds follow the route of the No. 7 train, looking for a Mexican torta, an Indian dosa, or a Tibetan momo.*

BEN KATCHOR

Still on Mott Street but a few blocks farther downtown, I visit another window to get an order of grilled cakes similar to what some of the vast new dim-sum restaurants serve as taro cakes. Then, on Division Street, I check the window of New South Wind coffee shop to make sure they haven't sold out of the specialty that's otherwise on display there, lean my bike against the window, dart in for a moment, and emerge with a rolled-up rice noodle studded with bits of some substances whose origin I do not intend to investigate. By the time I've taken care of the rice noodle, I'm often too full to sit down in an actual restaurant or even to stop for dessert at the shed of the Hong Kong Egg Cake Lady, who makes some musket-ball-shaped items that I've referred to in the past as "what madeleines would taste like if the French really understood such things."

It was on the way home from one of these rambles that I stopped my bike at East Broadway and Forsyth, where venders were selling several unfamiliar items. What caught my eye was a sandwich, tightly wrapped in clear plastic. It consisted of an ordinary Western-style bun—what I assume the Chinese would refer to with some word that translates literally as "the sort of bread foreign devils eat"—and something green peeking out of the middle. I risked a dollar for a taste. Inside the bun was a chopped vegetable that might have been bok choy or mustard greens, flavored with something that tasted like horseradish. I loved it. Whenever I was in Chinatown during the next few weeks, I'd pick up a few greens sandwiches and hand them out when I got back to the Village, like trophies from an adventure abroad. When a recipient of my largesse gobbled up the sandwich with great enthusiasm, I beamed with pride. When someone took a couple of bites, thanked me with elaborate courtesy, and carefully folded the plastic around the remains, I made an instantaneous diagnosis: Wooden Palate Syndrome. It turns out that you don't have to know what's in a sandwich to feel proprietary about it.

Then a thought occurred to me: this is chowhound stuff. I couldn't help thinking of the Arepa Lady. Jim Leff, who presides over chowhound.com and sometimes refers to himself as the Alpha Dog, has called the Arepa Lady "pretty much my signature 'find.' " Although Leff's site is basically a collection of message boards for the food-obsessed, it also includes such features as "What Jim Had for Dinner" and "When Bad Food Happens to Good People," plus an occasional special report. The Arepa Lady of Jackson Heights, Queens, rated a special report. Late on weekend evenings, Leff wrote, she grills the Colombian corn cakes called *arepas* at Seventy-ninth and Roosevelt Avenue. This is underneath the elevated tracks used by the No. 7 subway train as it passes over the cooking odors of several dozen countries on its route from Times Square to a booming second Chinatown that has developed since 1965 in Flushing. Because of the rumble of the No. 7, you often have to shout to be heard on Roosevelt Avenue, and what you're likely to be shouting is "What a *samosa!*" or "That's the best *taco al carbon* I've had outside of Mexico!" Roosevelt Avenue is the sort of place where someone who has just downed some Filipino barbecue may emerge from the restaurant and, in the next block or two, be tempted to follow that up with an Afghan shish kebab, a Mexican *torta*, an Indian *dosa*, and a Tibetan *momo* before making the decision about whether to go with Korean or Uruguayan baked goods. For devout chowhounds, the route of the No. 7 is El Camino de Santiago.

On this almost sacred ground, Leff cautions, you have to search among the venders for "the tiny, ageless woman with the beatific smile"—the Arepa Lady, serving what Leff has called his favorite food in New York. "The arepas themselves are snacks from heaven," his special report says. "You try one, and your first reaction is 'mmm, this is delicious.' But before that thought can fully form, waves of progressively deeper feelings begin crashing, and you are finally left silently nodding your head. You understand things. You have been loved." When the Alpha Dog finds something he likes, he eschews restraint.

Compared to the Arepa Lady, the vender I'd just patronized did lack a certain remoteness. There wasn't any question in my mind that her very convenience made the experience less chowhoundish than it might have been. New Yorkers who revel in chowhoundry tend to do most of their eating in the outer boroughs—particularly Queens and Brooklyn, where a lot of the people admitted in the place of all those Englishmen have congregated. Judged by the standards of people who post messages on chowhound.com, I am a stranger to the boroughs. Given the variety and quality of food available within walking distance of my house, I'm reluctant to leave lower Manhattan at mealtime. A vender of exotic foodstuffs is not likely to be discovered in an obscure neighborhood by someone who doesn't even like to go uptown.

## HYMN TO THE NECK

Tamed by starched collars or looped by the noose,
all hail the stem that holds up the frail cranial buttercup.
The neck throbs with dread of the guillotine's kiss, while
the silly, bracelet-craving wrists chafe in their handcuffs.
Your one and only neck, home to glottis, tonsils,
and many other highly specialized pieces of meat,
is covered with stubble. Three mornings ago, undeserving
sinner though she is, yours truly got to watch you shave
in the bath. Soap matted your chest hair. A clouded
hand mirror reflected a piece of your cheek. Vapor
rose all around like spirit-infested mist in some fabled
rain forest. The throat is a road. Speech is its pilgrim.
Something pulses visibly in your neck as the words
*Hand me a towel* flower from your mouth.

—*Amy Gerstler*

My vicarious experience in outer-borough eating, on the other hand, has been quite extensive. About ten years ago, before the Internet made chowhound.com possible, I'd begun to follow the travels of a food critic named Robert Sietsema, whose dispatches I read first in an occasional newsletter he puts out called *Down the Hatch* and then in the *Village Voice*. Although *Down the Hatch* began with a concentration on Manhattan, Sietsema was soon spending a lot of his time in places like a Haitian night club on Flatbush Avenue or a Portuguese *churrasqueira* off the Jericho Turnpike or an Arab diner in Astoria or a Ghanaian seafood restaurant in the Bronx. At the time, I hadn't met Sietsema, but I took to calling him "my man Sietsema." As my wife and I perused different publications over breakfast, she would occasionally comment on the news—"Looks like they've got another truce in Northern Ireland," say, or "The Fed is apparently going to cut the interest rate"—and I would say, "My man Sietsema's been eating at an Egyptian fish joint in Brooklyn," or "My man Sietsema has visited the best Oaxacan restaurant in New Brunswick." You might say that I followed Sietsema's adventures to the outer boroughs and beyond the way some sedentary Victorian burgher in Manchester or Leeds must have followed the travels of Henry Stanley in Africa.

Eventually, my man Sietsema was not the only adventurer I followed. A handful of professional food writers in New York spend enough time in out-of-the-way restaurants to be able to disagree among themselves—sometimes via the message boards of chowhound.com—about where to find the best Salvadoran *pupusa* or a superior Albanian *burek*. (Both of these turn out to be versions of meat or cheese inside dough; anyone who spends a lot of time trying unfamiliar cuisines in the boroughs may come away with the impression that most things turn out to be versions of meat or cheese inside dough.) Writers who concentrate on what is sometimes called ethnic eating or alternative eating or offbeat eating form a small, occasionally bickering community, like a community of drama critics who concentrate on Off Broadway. Or maybe Off Off Broadway.

Some of them—Myra Alperson, for instance, who publishes a newsletter called *NoshNews* ("Nosh your way from Odessa to Bombay. . . . And never leave New York")—are virtually full time in the neighborhoods. Others, like Eric Asimov, who writes the "$25 and Under" column for the *Times*, make occasional forays as part of their assignment to review inexpensive restaurants. They have produced a number of guidebooks, including Sietsema's "The Food Lover's Guide to the Best Ethnic

Eating in New York City" and Leff's "The Eclectic Gourmet Guide to Greater New York City." The Los Angeles equivalent would be Jonathan Gold's "Counter Intelligence." Members of the community do not limit themselves to the cooking of new immigrants. On chowhound.com, Leff insists that a true chowhound's lust for "hyperdeliciousness in all forms" includes foie gras and Château Margaux. Still, an adventurous eater in New York is not likely to spend his time in the latest chic Manhattan bistro while there are Nigerian yam-porridge outposts in Brooklyn left to explore.

Over the years, I've come to know several members of this community, and when I've talked to, say, Sietsema, or to Sylvia Carter, who began writing the "Eats" column for *Newsday* in 1980 and is sometimes referred to as the den mother of the alternative eaters, or to Ed Levine, who became familiar with the boroughs when he began his food-writing career searching out places to shop, I feel positively sedentary by comparison. It has occurred to me that, despite the hymns I have sung for years to the 1965 Immigration Act, I may not be completely emancipated. Eventually, I decided to get in touch with Jim Leff, and when I phoned him he asked if we should get together for a meal.

"Sure," I said.

"Great," Leff said. "You want to go to Danbury for goulash?"

That, I thought, was the Alpha Dog talking.

On chowhound.com, a battalion of food crazies stands ready to respond promptly and forthrightly if a complete stranger wants to know where to obtain the best version of a certain Vietnamese sandwich, or asks if there are any modestly priced restaurants his parents might like when they come from Moline for a visit, or seeks opinions on whether her friend's birthday splurge this year should be at Eleven Madison Park rather than at the Gramercy Tavern, or demonstrates an obvious need to be corrected by a more knowledgeable person on what to order in some new Chinese restaurant in Sunnyside. In fact, Leff assured me that if I posted news of my Chinatown sandwich, I would know within a

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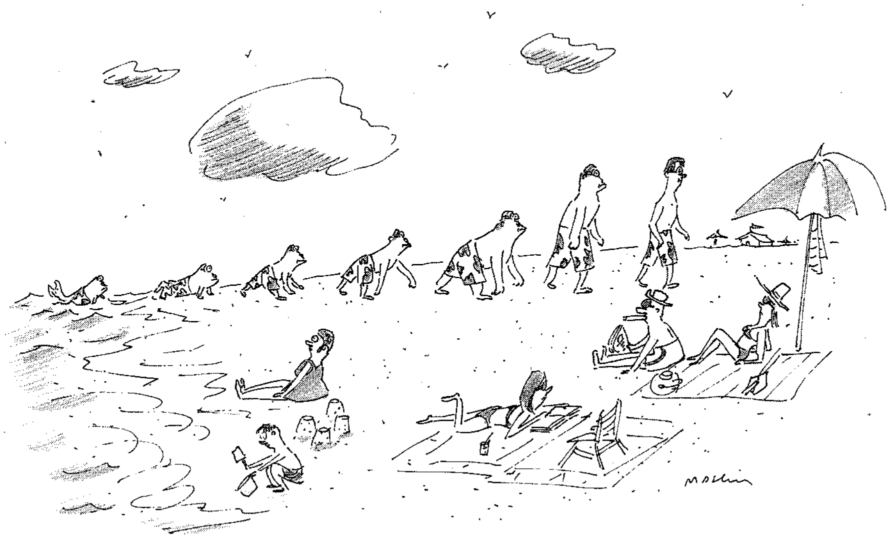


few hours not only its precise ingredients but maybe even where to get a better one. Eric Asimov has said that chowhound.com, with its generous exchange of information by people who are similarly obsessed, is just what a Web site was meant to be, which may be another way of saying that it doesn't make money.

Although food has been a passion for Jim Leff at least since high school, when he started sending restaurant tips to Sylvia Carter at *Newsday*, he makes his living in large part as a musician—a trombonist with a leaning toward jazz and a willingness to play Hasidic dance music if that's what the gig calls for. According to Sietsema, who played in a rock band himself for a number of years while making his living at the typing and book designing and photo editing he refers to as "urban roustabout work," Leff is a "bizarrely talented" trombonist. Asimov is a guitarist, and Jonathan Gold spent years playing the amplified cello in a punk-rock band. Ed Levine used to manage a jazz club in the Village. Someone might be able to put together a theory about a part of the brain that controls both offbeat food yearnings and an ear for rock or jazz music, but the way Sietsema explains it is that once you make the sound check late in the afternoon you've got nothing to do for four or five hours but search around in a strange neighborhood for someplace to get dinner.

Leff might be picked out of a crowded restaurant by someone told to look for the musician. A bearded, informally dressed man in his late thirties, he has dark hair pulled back into a knot. I've heard Leff and Sietsema and Gold and some members of what Leff calls his Fress Team—the *fressers* (Yiddish for eaters, or maybe trenchermen) who sometimes accompany him to a new restaurant he's trying—described as looking like "guys who stayed in graduate school too long." (Leff, in fact, did some graduate work, and Sietsema actually spent five years in graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, apparently without displaying any unseemly interest in a degree. Gold's "Counter Intelligence" begins, "For a while in my early twenties, my only clearly articulated ambition was to eat at least once at every restaurant on Pico Boulevard, starting with the fried yuca dish served at a *pupuseria* near where the street began in downtown Los Angeles, and working methodically westward toward the chili fries at Tom's #5 near the beach. It seemed a reasonable enough alternative to graduate school at the time.") If they showed up anonymously to review a fancy French restaurant on the Upper East Side, the question might be not whether the headwaiter would recognize them but whether he would be willing to seat them. The answer is presumably yes: Gold, who might be considered the alternative eater's first crossover act, now reviews mainstream New York restaurants for *Gourmet*.

My first glimpse of Leff did not turn out to be in a goulash restaurant in Danbury. Danbury seemed a long way to go for goulash, although Leff assured me that it was only an hour away, that the journey would include a stop at a homemade-yogurt place in East Elmhurst which also does great spinach pie, and that eating the Danbury goulash would almost certainly be an experience that transformed my life. He was also quick to say that the goulash place had not been discovered by him but by Jane and Michael Stern, who have been sniffing out unpretentious restaurants around the country for a number of years—although he was willing to take credit for discovering, in a manner of speaking, that the Sterns had underrated it.

Leff's eagerness to take me to what was, in effect, someone else's restaurant seemed to refute what other alternative eaters had told me about his singular attachment to restaurants that he has himself discovered. Most food writers who report on the offbeat pay at least lip service to the notion that it's of no real importance who happened to write about a restaurant first. Leff seems unembarrassed about using "Major Discovery" as a headline or referring to a restaurant as "my greatest discovery ever." He is exquisitely conscious of which restaurants were mentioned first on chowhound.com, reflecting the territorial instincts you might expect to encounter in an alpha dog. Jonathan Gold—who, like Robert Sietsema, has at times felt unwelcome on chowhound.com—has called Leff "the premier proponent of the paranoid school of restaurant criticism."

On the other hand, I can understand taking some pride in a signature pick. Witness how I feel about my greens sandwich. Discovery is part of the game. Also, discovery is hard work. Sietsema wears out a copy of "Hagstrom's New York City 5 Borough Atlas" every year as he prowls the streets, becoming particularly alert when he goes through a neighborhood in which, as he has put it, "the hipster coefficient is zero." When Sietsema reads in a neighborhood newspaper about a homicide in some bar described as a place frequented by West Africans, he finds himself wondering not about the victim or the crime but about whether the bar happens to be the sort of bar that serves food.

Sietsema says that, once a writer discovers a place, he may feel the necessity to "defend it against all comers." If others are unimpressed with it, after all, it wasn't much of a discovery. When I accompanied Ed Levine one day for a lunchtime outing in Queens—we'd started on Roosevelt Avenue with a Cuban sandwich at El Sitio and some *picaditas con carne* at a *taquería* called El Grano de Oro 2000, then finished up in Corona with an empanada at El Palacio de Empanada and a sublime eggplant-parmigiana sandwich at the Corona Heights Pork Store, those two treats separated by what you might call a palate cleanser of old-fashioned Italian lemon ice in a paper cup at Benfaremo, the Lemon Ice King of Corona—he did his impression of Jim Leff's response to hearing another eater's disappointment in, say, a Salvadoran *pupuseria* Leff had discovered: "But the cook went back to El Salvador. You didn't *know*? The mama's only in the kitchen on Thursday. You went on a Tuesday? You didn't *know*?"

The moment a restaurant is discovered, of course, it stands exposed to the danger of going downhill. It might indeed lose its cook to the constant back-and-forth of modern immigration. It might become self-conscious from having attracted what Leff refers to with great contempt as "Zagat-clutching foodies"—a foodie being in his lexicon precisely what a chowhound is not. Chowhound.com actually has a department called "Downhill Alert!" I once heard Leff say that the entire route of the No. 7 was going downhill. This was not long after the route, which has often been mentioned in the mainstream press, became the subject of a piece by Jonathan Gold in *Gourmet*, foodie central. (In the piece, Gold, perhaps innocently, mentioned that he'd never been able to find the Arepa Lady.) "The Indians are going, and it's mostly Pakistanis," Leff said of the No. 7. "And I love Pakistani food but these particular Pakistanis have sort of agreed not to cook it well, so there's not really good Indian food anymore. The Colombians . . . that are left are sort of hapless, and are not cooking that great. The Mexicans are coming in, we had great hopes, but there's a lot of bad Mexican food now in Jackson Heights."

The thrill of discovery is obviously enhanced by discovering something rare, or even unique. One of my forays with Leff included a lunch (if that's what the second or third meal you eat in the middle of the day is called) at a kosher Middle Eastern restaurant in Brooklyn called Olympic Pita, a place that I at first thought I'd been brought to because of a design element new to my experience: a large picture window in the dining room faced straight into the back of a one-car garage, a few feet away. The back of the garage had been totally covered in a forest (or maybe jungle) mural that blended with some bushes in the narrow grassy strip in front of it and with the green of the asphalt shingles on the roof. Leff then reminded me that what I would find truly rare about Olympic Pita was an Iraqi Jewish mango hot sauce called *amba*, which any student of that cuisine would be astounded to encounter in North America. "If you ever meet an Iraqi Jew and tell them you know where to get this, they will doubt your word," he informed me. "It's not considered available. It's extremely rare. This might be the rarest single food in town." I liked *amba*, which we spread generously on our *shawarma*. I thought of having something to put over on an Iraqi Jew as a little bonus.

All the offbeat eaters are, of course, aware that what seems breathtakingly exotic and authentic and even quaint could be a trap—that they could be so smitten by the palpably unspoiled granny bustling around the tiny kitchen in her babushka that they overlook the rocklike quality of her dumplings. If pressed, they will sadly report one another's propensity for falling into the trap. Leff has said that if a place selling astonishing blueberry muffins were next door to a so-so Mozambican place, Robert Sietsema would write about the Mozambican place and followers of "What Jim Had for Dinner" would hear about the blueberry muffins, the chowhoundian way being never to "ingest anything undelicious," whether it's exotic or not.

Sietsema, who believes he adheres to the nothing-undelicious principle of chowhoundishness himself, acknowl-

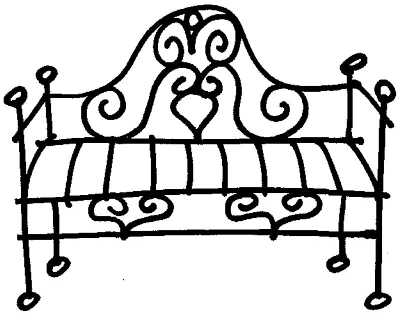
ZIEGLER
X-TREME CONVERSATION

edges that he takes an almost anthropological approach, even though anthropology was not one of the subjects he got around to studying during his academic career. He once told me, for instance, that he has spent some time trying to find out why all the Uzbekistani restaurants he's tried seem to have a dish called Korean carrots. The subject came up while we were having the second leg of lunch one day at an Uzbekistani restaurant in Forest Hills called Salut. We had started in Ridgewood with a Frisbee-size hamburger sandwich (a *pljeskavica*, actually) at a stand called Bosna Express Corp.—we ate on an automobile seat that had been propped against the wall across from two folding chairs to create the sort of sidewalk café one might expect to find in an area of the Balkans that had seen its share of trouble—and we would finish off with a *masala dosa* in a tiny café called Dosa Hutt, next to an ornate Hindu temple in Flushing. One theory he has come across about Korean carrots, Sietsema said, is that one of the conditions the Japanese imposed upon Russia after winning the Russo-Japanese War was that Russia accept some of Japan's unassimilated Koreans, who were then sent to Uzbekistan. On the other hand, Sietsema, who has a penchant for irony that is rare among the food-obsessed, finds it difficult to part with the notion that the name comes from the fact that Uzbeks, like everyone else in New York, buy their carrots from fruit-and-vegetable stands run by Koreans. I should say that the Korean carrots were not so-so. They were quite good. Not as good as a sort of vegetable-noodle soup called *lagman*, which we'd eaten just before the carrots arrived—the *lagman* was what Leff would have called hyperdelicious—but still quite good.

Not long after I'd accompanied Leff and his Fress Team one Tuesday night to a place near Sheepshead Bay that he'd heard was "the end-all and be-all of Georgian food"—it won out as our destination over the restaurant in a Russian *shvitz* called Wall St. Bath & Day Spa—Robert Sietsema, who happens to live only a few blocks from me in the Village, came by with some early issues of *Down the Hatch* that I'd asked to see. The Fress Team outing had started me thinking about how strenuous chowhounding is—strenuous, I mean, beyond just the strain of eating two or three lunches. On the way to Sheepshead Bay, Leff had outlined some of the problems we might face. For one thing, given the language difficulties he'd encountered when he phoned the restaurant, it could turn out to be closed on Tuesdays. In case we found ourselves in need of a fallback, he'd brought along a thick printout that listed, in tiny type, all of the restaurants in his repertoire, arranged by neighborhood. Some of the restaurants were listed by name only, and some not even by name ("Irish place in back of Ping's"). Some of them included comments or favorite dishes. On the upper left-hand corner of the first page was typed 3281, the number of restaurants on the list. Leafing through the printout, I told Leff that it looked like the life list of a particularly maniacal birder.

He ticked off some other potential problems: maybe Tuesday was such a slow night they'd have nothing available beyond chicken and *pelmeni*, which he has referred to as "the ubiquitous Russian tortellini." Or maybe the menus would be in Cyrillic characters only, meaning that the glossary he'd taken the trouble to assemble that afternoon, partly from research on the Internet, would do him no good at all.

In chowhounding, the language problem is ever present. So is the danger of being ensnared in the quaint-granny trap. So is the difficulty of familiarizing yourself with dozens of different cuisines. When we finally did get to the Georgian restaurant and managed to order, Leff, who says that he has eaten in every decent Georgian restaurant in New York, was confident that the *khachapuri* (as it happens, a version of cheese inside dough) was insufficiently flaky, given its startling resemblance to quesadillas; as someone who has travelled extensively as a musician, he is in a position to compare, say, *salgadinhos* he tries in Astoria to the *salgadinhos* he has had in Brazil. But, given the rate and variety of immigration, there is a limit to everyone's experience. At the Olympic Pita, had we been eating a superior *amba* or only a run-of-the-mill *amba*? If I did ever meet an Iraqi Jew and proudly escorted him to Olympic Pita for a little surprise, would he say derisively, after a quick taste, "They told you that was *amba*?"



At my house, Sietsema and I talked a bit about the restaurants we liked in the Village. I reminded him how fortunate we were to live in an area that offered such remarkable food only a stroll away. I'd told him about a restaurant in Hoboken, and I realized that I liked the thought of my man Sietsema, armed with a street atlas of Hudson County, checking it out, maybe on one of those mild fall evenings when my wife and I enjoy walking to a pizza parlor on Spring Street which we treasure for its clam pie. Maybe he'd happen across a fabulous purveyor of Guyanese *rotis* or Dominican fritters on the way. Thinking about a walk downtown reminded me of my greens sandwich. I had posted it on chowhound.com, but nobody seemed interested in enlightening me about its origin or telling me where I could get a better one—although only a few days later there was, coincidentally, a spirited discussion about the steamed buns in the place I patronize on Mott Street. I happened to have a greens sandwich in the fridge, and I offered it to Sietsema. I like to think that I hadn't prepared myself to respond to an unenthusiastic reception by saying that refrigeration is known to deaden the taste of Chinese greens or that I'd heard rumors that the regular sandwich maker had recently been picked up by Immigration.

Sietsema loved it. "It's a real find," he said. "A totally unique entity."

"Did you say 'totally unique entity'?" I said.

He had.

"Well, thank you," I said. "Thank you very much." ♦

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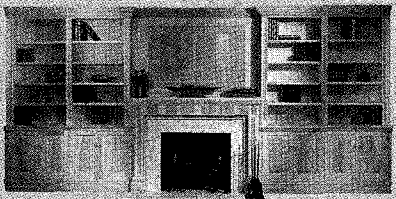

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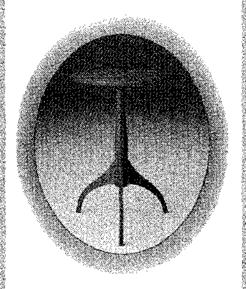

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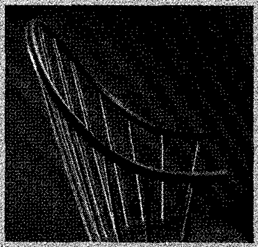

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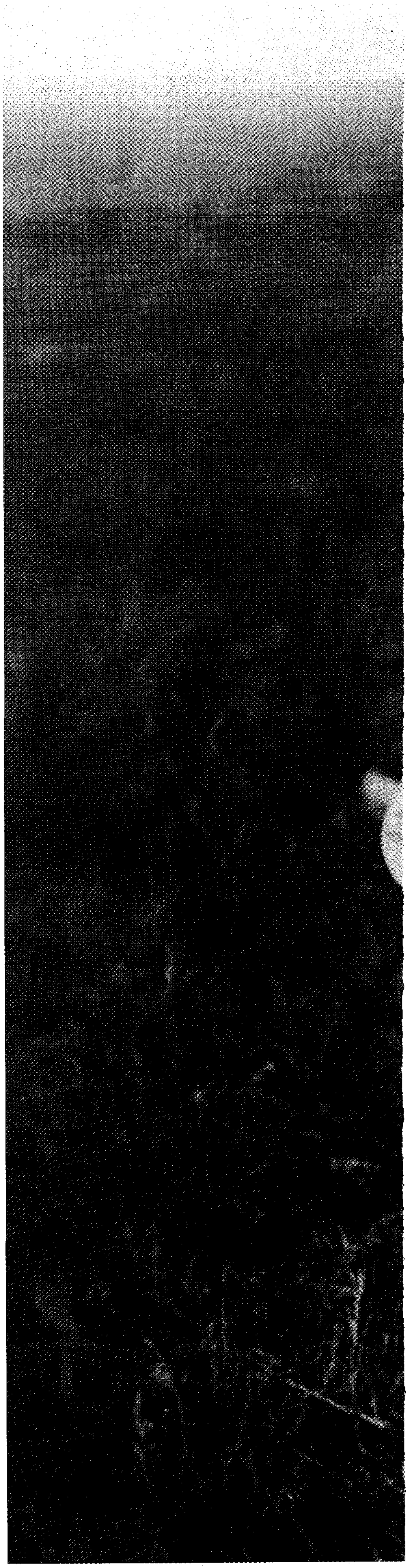
FICTION

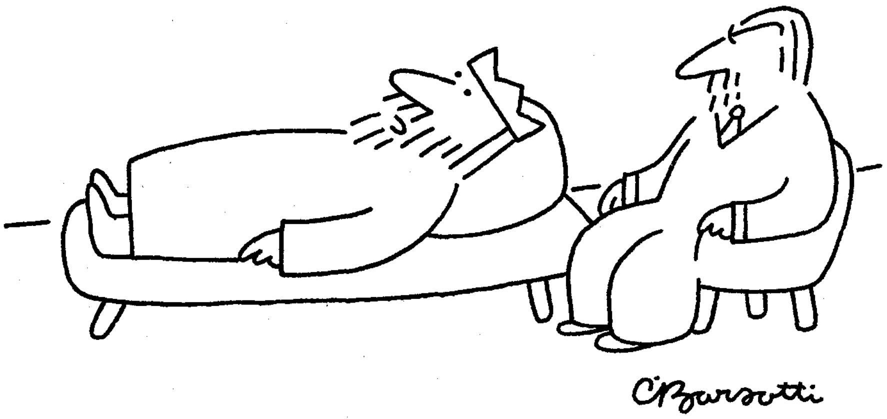
# AUSTERLITZ

BY W. G. SEBALD



Almost every time I went to London in the years that followed my first encounter with Austerlitz, in Antwerp, in the late nineteen-sixties, I visited Austerlitz where he worked in Bloomsbury, not far from the British Museum. I would usually spend an hour or so sitting with him in his crowded study, which was like a stockroom of books and papers with hardly any space left for himself, let alone his students, among the stacks piled high on the floor and the overloaded shelves. When I began my own studies in Germany, I had learned almost nothing from the scholars then lecturing in the humanities there, most of them academics who had built their careers in the nineteen-thirties and forties and still nurtured delusions of power, and I found Austerlitz the first teacher I could listen to since my school days. I remember to this day how easily I could grasp what he called his tentative ideas when he talked about the architectural style of the capitalist era, a subject that he said had fascinated him since his own student days, speaking in particular of the compulsive sense of order and the tendency toward monumentalism evident in law courts and penal institutions, railway stations and stock exchanges, opera houses and lunatic asylums, and the dwellings built for the labor force to rectangular grid patterns. His investigations, so Austerlitz once told me, had long outstripped their original purpose as a project for a dissertation, proliferating in his hands into endless preliminary sketches for a study of the family likeness between all these buildings. Why he had embarked on such a wide field, said Austerlitz, he did not know; very likely he had been poorly advised when he first began his research work. But, then again, it was also true that he was still obeying an impulse that he himself, to this day, did not really understand, but which was somehow linked to his early fascination with the idea of a network such as that of the entire railway system.

At the very beginning of his studies, said Austerlitz, and later, when he was first living in Paris, he used to visit one of the main railway stations almost daily, usually the Gare du Nord or the Gare de l'Est and especially in the morning or evening, to see the steam locomotives moving into the soot-blackened, glass-roofed halls, or to watch the brightly illuminated, mysterious Pullman trains slide gently out into the night like ships on the endless expanse of the sea. He had quite often found himself in the grip of dangerous and entirely incomprehensible currents of emotion in the Parisian railway stations, which, he said, he regarded as places marked by both blissful happiness and profound misfortune. I can still see Austerlitz one afternoon in the London institute making this comment, speaking not so much to me as to himself, and it was the only hint of his personal life he allowed himself to give me before I returned to Germany at the end of 1975, intending to settle permanently in my native country, to which I felt I had become a stranger after nine years of absence. As far as I remember, I wrote to Austerlitz from Munich a couple of times, but I never had any reply to my letters, either because, as I thought at the time, Austerlitz was away somewhere or, as I now think, because he did not like writing to Germany. Whatever the reason for his silence, the link between us was broken, and I did not renew it when, scarcely a year later, I decided to return to the United Kingdom. It would now of course have been up to me to let Austerlitz know of the unforeseen change in my plans, and my failure to do so may have resulted from the fact that soon after my return I went through a difficult period which dulled my sense of other people's existence, and from



*"Father was a tyrant."*

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which I only very gradually emerged by turning back to the writing I had long neglected.

We did not resume our old relationship, which had been both a close and a distant one, until two decades later, in December, 1996, and through a curious chain of circumstances. I was in some anxiety at the time, because I had noticed, looking up an address in the telephone book, that the sight in my right eye had almost entirely disappeared overnight, so to speak. Even when I glanced up from the page open in front of me and turned my gaze to the framed photographs on the wall, all my right eye could see was a row of dark shapes curiously distorted above and below—the figures and landscapes familiar to me in every detail having resolved indiscriminately into a black and menacing cross-hatching. Since there was no improvement in my condition over the next few days, I went to London just before Christmas to see a Czech ophthalmologist who had been recommended to me. As usual when I go down to London on my own, a kind of dull despair stirred within me on that December morning. I looked out at the flat, almost treeless landscape, the vast brown expanse of the plowed fields, the railway stations where I would never get out, the crippled bushes overgrown with dead traveller's joy on the embankments, the empty greyhound track at Romford, the ugly backs of the terraced houses past which the railway line runs in the suburbs of the metropolis, the Manor Park cemetery and the tower blocks of flats in Hackney, sights that are always the same and flit past me whenever I go to London, yet remain alien and incomprehensible in spite of all the years that have passed since my arrival in England. I always feel particularly apprehensive on the last stretch of the journey, where just before turning into Liverpool Street Station the train must wind its way over several sets of points through a narrow defile, and where the brick walls with their round arches, columns, and niches, blackened with soot and diesel oil, rise above both sides of the track. It was around three in the afternoon by the time I reached Harley Street and was standing by the window in the soft lamplight of Zdenek Gregor's slightly overheated waiting room. From the gray sky that lowered over the city outside, a few isolated snowflakes were floating down, and disappeared into the dark chasms of the yards behind the buildings. I thought of the onset of winter in the mountains, the complete absence of sound, and my childhood wish for everything to be snowed over, the whole village and the valley all the way to the mountain peaks, and how I used to imagine what it would be like when we thawed out again and emerged from the ice in spring.

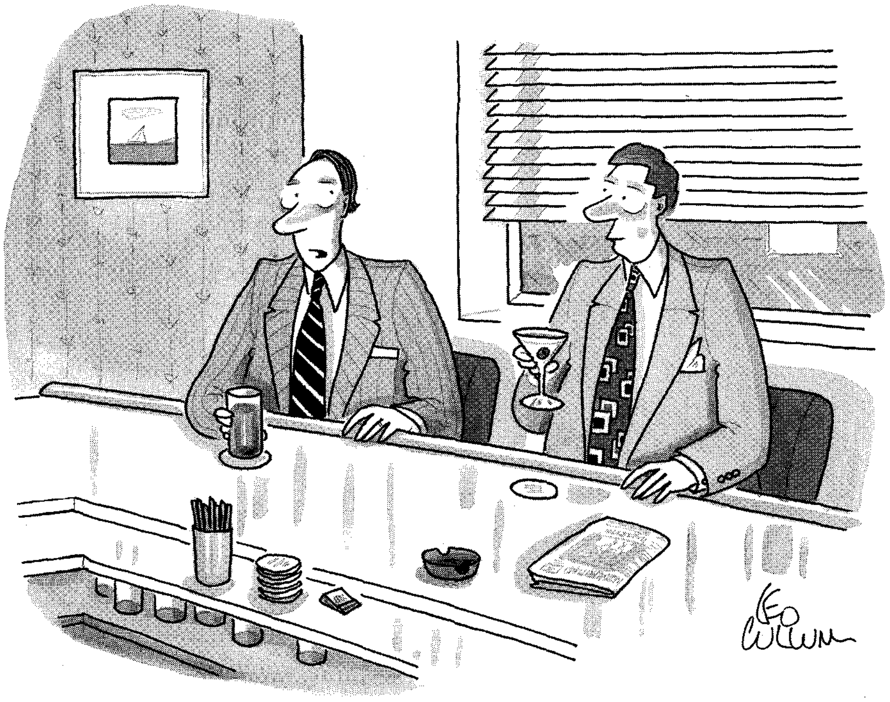
There was considerable uncertainty, said Zdenek Gregor after he had examined my right eye, about the causes of the disorder, described by the literature on the subject as central serous chorioretinopathy. All that was really known was that it occurred almost exclusively in middle-aged men who spent too much time reading and writing. After the consultation, I must have a procedure called a fluorescein angiography carried out to determine the affected area of the retina more precisely—this would mean taking a series of photographs of my eyes. The technician was a man of extraordinarily distinguished appearance, who wore a white turban and looked, I foolishly thought, rather like the prophet Muhammad. He carefully rolled up my shirtsleeve, and inserted the tip of the needle into the prominent vein below the crook of my elbow without my feeling anything at all. While he was introducing the contrast medium into my bloodstream, he said I might feel slightly unwell in a little while, and in any case my skin would be discolored yellow for a few hours. After we had sat in silence for a moment or two, both in our respective places in the little room, which, like a sleeping car, was illuminated only by a dim bulb, he asked me to move closer to him and place my head in the framework fixed in a kind of stand on the table, with my chin in a shallow depression and my forehead against the iron band above it.

Half an hour later, I was sitting in the saloon bar of the Great Eastern Hotel at Liverpool Street, waiting for the next train home. I had sought out a dark corner, since by now I did indeed feel rather qualmish inside my yellow skin. On the way to the station in the taxi, we had seemed to be driving in a wide, looping trajectory through some kind of Luna Park, so strangely did the city lights turn beyond the windscreen, and now the dim globes of the sconces, the mirrors behind the bar, and the colorful batteries of bottles of spirits were circling before my eyes as if I were on a roundabout. Leaning my head against the wall, and breathing deeply and slowly from time to time when I felt nausea rising, I had for a good while been watching the toilers in the City gold mines as they came to meet at their usual watering hole early in the evening, all of them identical in their dark-blue suits, striped shirts, and gaudy ties, and as I tried to grasp the mysterious habits of the members of this species, which is not to be found in any bestiary—their preference for crowding close together, their semi-gregarious, semi-aggressive demeanor, the way they put their throats back in emptying their glasses, the increasingly excitable babble of their voices, the sudden hasty departure of one or another of them—as I was watching all of this I suddenly noticed a solitary figure on the edge of the agitated crowd, a figure who could only be Austerlitz, whom I realized at that moment I had not seen for twenty years.

He had not changed at all in either his carriage or his clothing, and even had the rucksack still slung over his shoulder. Only his fair, wavy hair was paler, although it still stuck out oddly from his head as it used to. Nonetheless, while I had always thought he was about ten years older than I, he now seemed ten years younger, whether because of my own poor state of health or because he was one of those bachelors who retain something boyish about them all their days. As far as I remember, I was overcome for a considerable time by my amazement at the unexpected return of Austerlitz. In any case, I recollect that before approaching him I had been thinking at some length about his personal similarity to Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the horror-stricken expressions on both their faces. I believe it was mainly the rucksack, which Austerlitz told me later he had bought for ten shillings from Swedish stock in an army-surplus store in the Charing Cross Road just before he began his studies, describing it as the only truly reliable thing in his life, which put into my head what on the surface was the rather outlandish idea of a certain physical likeness between him and the philosopher, who died of cancer in Cambridge in 1951. Wittgenstein always carried a rucksack, too, in Puchberg and in Otterthal, when he went to Norway, Ireland, or Kazakhstan, or home to his sisters to spend Christmas with them in the Alleegasse. That rucksack, which his sister Margarete once told him in a letter was almost as dear to her as himself, went everywhere with him. And now, whenever I see a photograph of Wittgenstein somewhere or other, I feel more and more as if Austerlitz were gazing at me out of it, and when I look at Austerlitz it is as if I see in him the disconsolate philosopher, a man locked into the glaring clarity of his logical thinking as inextricably as into his confused emotions, so striking is the likeness between the two of them: in stature, in the way they study one as if across an invisible barrier, in the makeshift organization of their lives, in a wish to manage with as few possessions as possible, and in the inability, typical of Austerlitz as it was of Wittgenstein, to linger over any kind of preliminaries. Accordingly, and without wasting any words on the coincidence of our meeting again after all this time, Austerlitz took up the conversation that evening in the bar of the Great Eastern Hotel more or less where it had last been broken off.

He had spent the afternoon, he told me, looking round the Great Eastern, which was soon to be thoroughly renovated, concentrating mainly on the Freemasons' temple incorporated into the hotel by the directors of the railway company at the turn of the century, when the building had only just been completed and furnished with the utmost luxury. Though I really gave up my architectural studies long ago, he said, I sometimes relapse into my old habits, even if I don't make notes and sketches anymore, but simply marvel at the strange edifices we construct. Oddly enough, said Austerlitz, that afternoon he had been thinking of our encounters in Belgium, so long ago now, and telling himself he must find someone to whom he could tell his own story, a story that he had learned only in the last few years and for which he needed the kind of listener I had once been in Antwerp, Liège, and Zeebrugge. Contrary to all statistical probability, then, there was an amazing, a positively imperative internal logic to his meeting me here in the bar of the Great Eastern Hotel, a place he had never before entered in his life. Having said this, Austerlitz fell silent, and for a while, it seemed to me, he gazed into the farthest distance.

Since my childhood and youth, he finally began, looking at me again, I have never known who I really was. From where I stand now, of course, I can see that my name alone, and the fact that it was kept from me until my fifteenth year, ought to have put me on the track of my origins, but it has also become clear to me of late why an agency greater than or superior to my own capacity for thought, which circumspectly directs operations somewhere in my brain, has always preserved me from my own secret, systematically preventing me from drawing the obvious conclusions and embarking on the inquiries they would have suggested to me. It hasn't been easy to make my way out of my own inhibitions, and it will



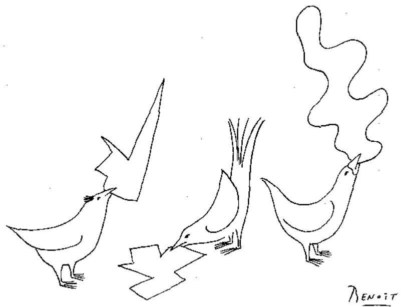
*"Then I made the leap from skilled labor to unskilled management."*

not be easy now to put the story into anything like proper order.

I grew up, began Austerlitz that evening in the bar of the Great Eastern Hotel, in the little country town of Bala, in Wales, in the home of a Calvinist preacher and former missionary called Emyr Elias, who was married to a timid-natured Englishwoman. I have never liked looking back at the time I spent in that unhappy house, which stood in isolation on a hill just outside the town and was much too large for two people and an only child. Several rooms on the top floor were kept shut up year in, year out. Even today, I still sometimes dream that one of those locked doors opens and I step through it, into a friendlier, more familiar world. Several of the rooms that were not locked were unused, too. Furnished sparsely with a bed or a chest of drawers, curtains drawn even during the day, they drowsed in a twilight that soon extinguished every sense of self-awareness in me. So I can recall almost nothing of my early days in Bala except how it hurt to be suddenly called by a new name, and how dreadful it was, once my own clothes had disappeared, to have to go around dressed in the English fashion, in shorts, knee-length socks that were always slipping down, a string vest like a fishnet, and a mouse-gray shirt, much too thin. I know that I often lay awake for hours in my narrow bed in the manse, trying to conjure up the faces of those whom I had left, I feared through my own fault, but not until I was numb with weariness and my eyelids sank in the darkness did I see my mother bending down to me just for a fleeting moment, or my father smiling as he put on his hat. Such comfort made it all the worse to wake up early in the morning and have to face the knowledge, new every day, that I was not at home now but very far away, in some kind of captivity.

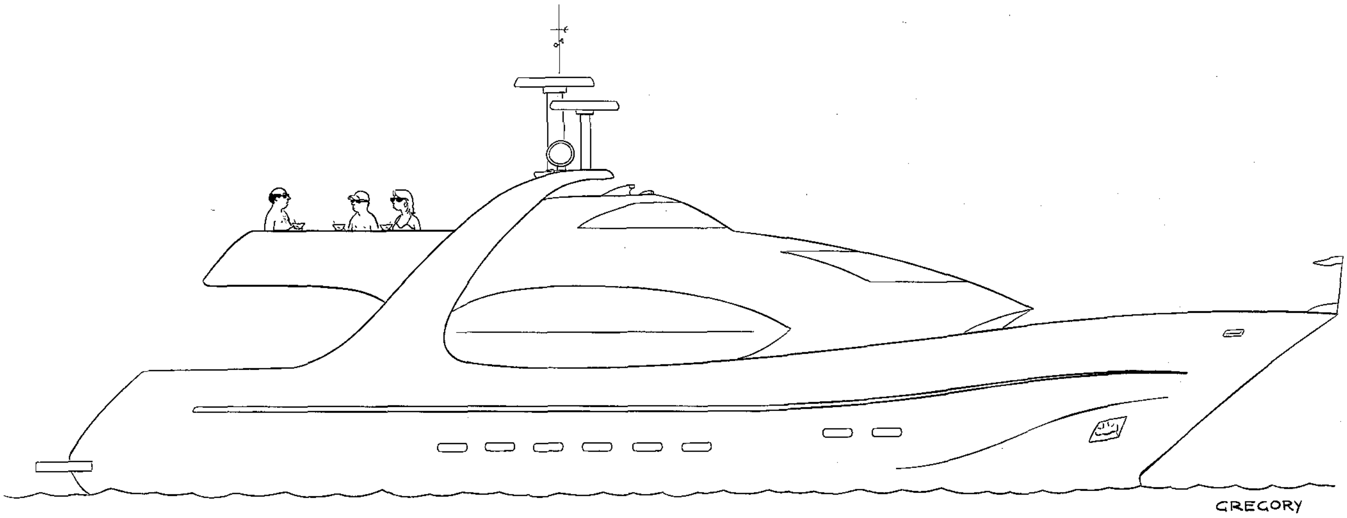
The manse was always freezing, Austerlitz continued, not just in winter, when the only fire was often in the kitchen stove and the stone floor in the hallway was frequently covered with hoarfrost, but in autumn, too, and well into spring and the infallibly wet summer. And just as cold reigned in the house in Bala, so did silence. The minister's wife was always busy with her housework, dusting, mopping the tiled floor, doing the laundry, polishing the brass door fittings, and preparing the meagre meals, which we usually ate without a word. Sometimes she merely walked round the house making sure that everything was in its proper place, from which she would never allow it to be moved. I once found her sitting on a chair in one of the half-empty rooms upstairs, with tears in her eyes and a crumpled wet handkerchief in her hand. When she saw me standing in the doorway, she rose and said it was nothing, she had only caught a cold, and as she went out she ran her fingers through my hair, the one time, as far as I remember, she ever did such a thing.

Meanwhile, it was the minister's unalterable custom to sit in his study, which had a view of a dark corner of the garden, thinking about next Sunday's sermon. He never wrote any of these sermons down but worked them out in his head, toiling over them for at least four days. He would always emerge from his study in the evening in a state of deep despondency, only to disappear into it again next morning. But on Sunday, when he stood up in chapel in front of his congregation and often addressed them for a full hour, he was a changed man; he spoke with a moving eloquence that I still feel I can hear, conjuring up before the eyes of his flock the Last Judgment awaiting them all, the lurid fires of Purgatory, the torments of damnation, and then, with the most wonderful stellar and celestial imagery, the entry of the righteous into eternal bliss. With apparent ease, as if he were making up the most appalling horrors as he went along, he always succeeded in filling the hearts of his congregation with such sentiments of remorse that at the end of the service quite a number of them went home looking white as a sheet. The minister himself, on the other hand, was in a comparatively jovial mood for the rest of Sunday. At midday dinner, which always began with tapioca soup, he would make a few informative and semi-jocular remarks to his wife, who was exhausted from cooking the meal, would inquire after my welfare, generally by asking, "And how is the boy?," and try to draw me out a little. The meal always finished with the minister's favorite dish of rice pudding, and he usually fell silent as he enjoyed it. Once dinner was over, he would lie down on the sofa to rest for an hour or, in fine weather, he would sit out under the apple tree in the front garden looking down the valley, as well satisfied with his week's work as the Lord God of Sabaoth after the creation of the world.



Before evening prayers, he went to his rolltop desk and took out the tin box in which he kept the calendar published by the Calvinist Methodists of Wales, a gray little book already worn rather threadbare and listing the Sundays and church festivals for the years 1928 to 1946, in which he had made regular entries against every date, week by week, removing the thin solid-ink pencil from the back of the book, moistening its tip with his tongue, and very slowly and neatly, like a schoolboy being supervised, noting down the name of the chapel where he had preached that day and the Biblical passage he had taken as his text, for instance, under 3 August 1941: Chapel Uchaf, Gilboa—Zephaniah III, 6, "I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by."

For the most part, of course, these Sunday sermons, and I must have heard more than five hundred of them, went over my head when I was a child, but even if the meaning of the various words and phrases was a mystery to me for a long time, and whether Elias delivered them in English or Welsh, I did understand that his subject was the sinfulness and punishment of mankind, fire and ashes and the approaching end of the world. However, said Austerlitz, in my memory Calvinist eschatology is linked not so much to these Biblical images of destruction as to what I saw with my own eyes when I was out with Elias. Many of his younger colleagues in the ministry had been called up into the Army soon after the beginning of the



*"It's a little present I gave myself for being so rich."*

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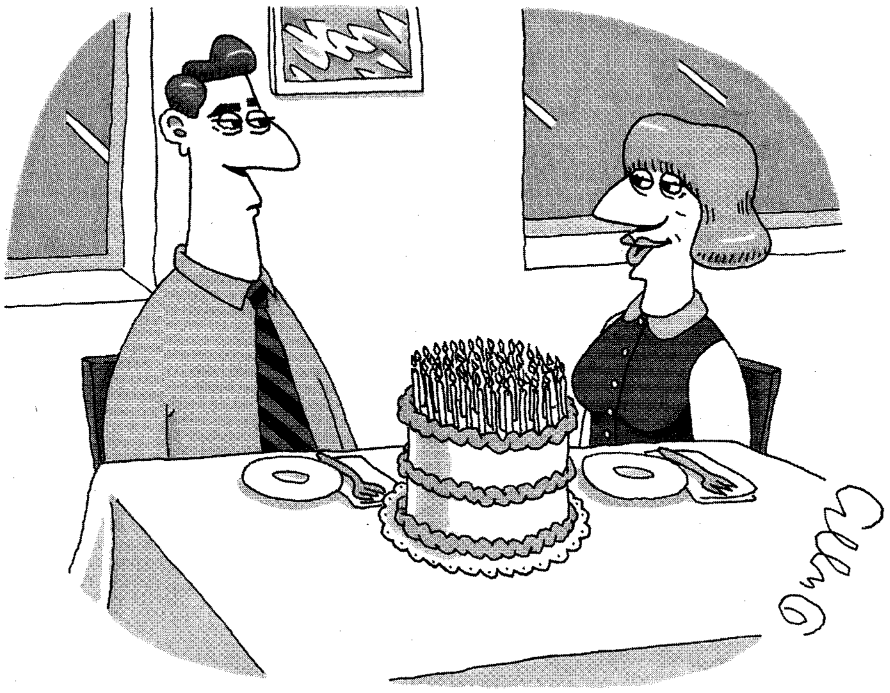
war, and consequently at least every other Sunday he had to go and preach to another congregation, often quite a long way off. At first, we drove across country in a little two-seater trap drawn by an almost snow-white pony, and in accordance with Elias's usual custom he would sit hunched up in the blackest of moods on the outward journey. On the way back, however, his spirits rose, just as they did at home on Sunday afternoons; he sometimes even hummed to himself, and cracked the whip around the pony's ears now and then.

Once, I think when I was nine, I went away with Elias to a place in South Wales where the flanks of the mountains had been ripped open on both sides of the road and the woods mauled and cut down. I don't remember the name of the village we reached at nightfall. It was surrounded by pithead stocks of coal spilling down into the alleys here and there. We had been given a room in the house of one of the church elders, from which there was a view of a winding tower with a gigantic wheel turning now this way and now that in the gathering dusk, and further down the valley tall flames and showers of sparks shot high into the sky from the smelting furnaces of an iron- and steelworks, at regular intervals of about three or four minutes. When I was in bed, Elias sat on a stool by the window, looking out in silence for a long time. I think that it was the sight of the valley first illuminated by the firelight, then sinking back into darkness, which inspired him to preach on a text from Revelation next morning, delivering a sermon on the wrath of the Lord, on the war and the devastation of the dwellings of men, a diatribe in which, so the elder told him when we left, he had surpassed himself. If the congregation had been almost petrified by terror during the sermon, I myself could hardly have had the divine power invoked by Elias more permanently impressed on my mind than by the fact that a bomb had dropped in broad daylight that afternoon in the little town at the end of the valley where Elias was to take evening prayers that same day. The ruins were still smoldering when we reached the center of the town, and people were standing about in the road in small groups, some with their hands still raised to their mouths in horror. The fire engine had driven straight across a round flower bed, and there on the grass, dressed in their Sunday best, lay the bodies of those who, as I hardly needed Elias to tell me, had sinned against the Lord's commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy.

In this way, a kind of Old Testament mythology of retribution gradually built up inside my head, and I always saw its supreme expression in the submersion of the village of Llanwddyn beneath the waters of the Vyrnwy reservoir. As far as I can remember, it was on the way back from one of his journeys to preach away from home, at either Abertridwr or Pont Llogel, that Elias stopped the pony trap on the banks of this lake and walked out with me to the middle of the dam, where he told me about his family home lying down there at a depth of about a hundred feet under the dark water, and not just his own family home but at least forty other houses and farms, together with the church of St. John of Jerusalem, three chapels, and three pubs, all of them drowned when the dam was finished, in the autumn of 1888. In the years before its submersion, so Elias had told him, said Austerlitz, Llanwddyn had been particularly famous for the games of football on the village green when the full moon shone in summer, often lasting all night and played by more than ten dozen youths and men of almost every age, some of them from neighboring villages. The story of the football games of Llanwddyn occupied my imagination for a long time, said Austerlitz, first and foremost, I am sure, because Elias never told me anything else about his own life either before or afterward. At this one moment on the Vyrnwy dam when, intentionally or unintentionally, he allowed me a glimpse into his clerical heart, I felt for him so much that he, the righteous man, seemed to me like the only survivor of the deluge that had destroyed Llanwddyn, while I imagined all the others—his parents, his brothers and sisters, his relations, their neighbors, all the other vil-



"O.K.! Time to make a wish, clear it with me, and blow out the candles."

lagers—still down in the depths, sitting in their houses and walking along the road, but unable to speak and with their eyes opened far too wide.

This notion of mine about the subaquatic existence of the people of Llanwddyn also had something to do with the album that Elias first showed me on our return home that evening, containing several photographs of his birthplace, now sunk beneath the water. As there were no other pictures of any kind in the manse, I leafed again and again though these few photographs, until the people looking out of them, the blacksmith in his leather apron, Elias's father the sub-postmaster, the shepherd walking along the village street with his sheep, and most of all the girl sitting in a chair in the garden with her little dog on her lap, became as familiar to me as if I were living with them down at the bottom of the lake. At night, before I fell asleep in my cold room, I often felt as if I, too, had been submerged in that dark water, and like the poor souls of Vyrnwy must keep my eyes wide open to catch a faint glimmer of light far above me, and see the reflection, broken by ripples, of the stone tower standing in such fearsome isolation on the wooded bank. Sometimes I even imagined that I had seen one or another of the people from the photographs in the album walking down the road in Bala, or out in the fields, particularly around noon on hot summer days, when there was no one else about and the air flickered hazily.

Elias said I was not to speak of such things, so instead I spent every free moment I could with Evan the cobbler, whose workshop was not far from the manse and who had a reputation for seeing ghosts. I also learned Welsh from Evan, picking it up very quickly, because I liked his stories much better than the endless psalms and Biblical verses I had to learn by heart for Sunday school. Unlike Elias, who always connected illness and death with tribulations, just punishment, and guilt, Evan told tales of the dead who had been struck down by fate untimely, who knew they had been cheated of what was due to them and tried to return to life. If you had an eye for them, they were to be seen quite often, said Evan. At first glance, they seemed to be normal people, but when you looked more closely their faces would blur or flicker slightly at the edges. And they were usually a little shorter than they had been in life, for the experience of death, said Evan, diminishes us, just as a piece of linen shrinks when you first wash it. The dead almost always walked alone, but they did sometimes go around in small troops. Evan told me the story of how his grandfather once had to step aside on the road from Frongastell to Pyrsau to let one of these ghostly processions pass by when it caught up with him. It had consisted entirely of beings of dwarfish stature who strode on at a fast pace, leaning forward slightly and talking to one another in reedy voices. Hanging from a hook on the wall above Evan's low workbench, said Austerlitz, was the black veil that his grandfather had taken from the bier when the small figures muffled in their cloaks carried it past him, and it was certainly Evan, said Austerlitz, who once told me that nothing but a piece of silk like that separates us from the next world.

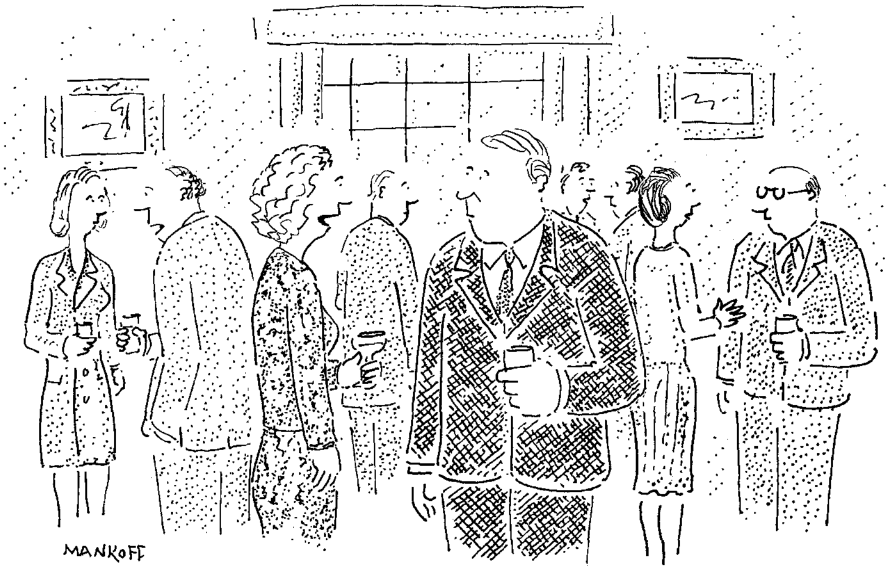
It is a fact that through all the years I spent at the manse in Bala I never shook off the feeling that something very obvious, very manifest in itself, was hidden from me. Sometimes it was as if I were in a dream and trying to perceive reality; then again I felt as if an invisible twin brother were walking beside me, the reverse of a shadow, so to speak. And I suspected that some meaning relating to myself lay behind the Bible stories I was given to read in Sunday school from my sixth year onward, a meaning quite different from the sense of the printed words as I ran my index finger along the lines. I can still see myself, said Austerlitz, muttering intently and spelling out the story of Moses again and again from the large-print children's edition of the Bible Miss Parry had given me when I had been set to learn by heart the chapter about the confounding of the languages of the earth.

I have only to turn a couple of pages of that book, said Austerlitz, to remember how anxious I felt at the time when I read the tale of the daughter of Levi, who made an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with slime and with pitch, placed the child in the ark and laid it among the reeds by the side of the water—*yn yr hesg ar fin yr afon*, I think that was how it ran. Further on in the story of Moses, said Austerlitz, I particularly liked the episode where the children of Israel cross a terrible wilderness, many days' journey long and wide, with nothing in sight but sky and sand as far as the eye can see. I tried to picture the pillar of cloud going before the people on their wanderings "to lead them the way," as the Bible puts it, and I immersed myself, forgetting all around me, in a full-page illustration showing the desert of Sinai looking just like the part of Wales where I grew up, with bare mountains crowding close together and a gray-hatched background, which I took sometimes for the sea and sometimes for the air above it. And indeed, said Austerlitz, I knew that my proper place was among the tiny figures populating the camp. I examined every square inch of the illustration, which seemed to me uncannily familiar. I thought I could make out a stone quarry in a rather lighter patch on the steep slope of the mountain over to the right, and I seemed to see a railway track in the regular curve of the lines below it. But my mind dwelt chiefly on the fenced square in the middle and the tentlike building at the far end, with a cloud of white smoke above it. Whatever may have been going on inside me at the time, the children of Israel's camp in the wilderness was closer to me than life in Bala, which I found more incomprehensible every day, or, at least, said Austerlitz, that is how it strikes me now.

That evening in the bar of the Great Eastern Hotel, Austerlitz also told me that there was no wireless set or newspaper in the manse in Bala. I don't know that Elias and his wife, Gwendolyn, ever mentioned the fighting on the continent of Europe, he said. I couldn't imagine any world outside Wales. Only after the end of the war did this state of affairs begin to change. A new epoch seemed to dawn with the victory celebrations, when even in Bala there was dancing in the streets decked with brightly colored bunting. For me, it began when I first broke the ban on going to the cinema, and after that I used to watch the newsreel from the cubbyhole occupied by the film projectionist, Owen, one of the three sons of the visionary Evan. Around the same time, Gwendolyn's state of health deteriorated, almost imperceptibly at first but then with increasing speed. She, who had always kept everything in the most painfully neat order, began to neglect first the house and then herself. She simply stood in the kitchen, looking helpless, and when Elias prepared a meal as best he could she would eat almost nothing.

Her illness was certainly the reason that I was sent to a private school near Oswestry in the autumn term of 1946, when I was twelve years old. Like most such educational establishments, Stower Grange was the most unsuitable place imaginable for an adolescent. The headmaster, a man called Penrith-Smith, who wandered aimlessly about the school buildings in his dusty gown all day from early morning until late at night, was hopelessly forgetful and absent-minded, and the rest of the teaching staff in that immediate postwar period was also a curious collection of oddities, most of them over sixty or suffering from some affliction. There were all kinds of forms of major tyranny and minor despotism, forced labor, enslavement, serfdom, the bestowal and withdrawal of privileges, hero worship, ostracism, the imposition of penalties and the granting of reprieves, and by dint of these the pupils, without any supervision, governed themselves and indeed the entire school, not excluding the masters. Sometimes, particularly at weekends, it seemed as if all the masters had gone away, leaving the pupils in their care to their own devices in the school, which was at least two miles outside town. Then some of us would wander about at our own sweet will, while others hatched plots to extend their power bases, or went to the laboratory furnished only with a few rickety benches and stools at the end of the dark basement corridor known, for some inexplicable reason, as the Red Sea, to toast bread and make scrambled eggs from a sulfur-yellow powdered egg substitute, a large supply of which was kept in one of the wall cupboards, along with other substances intended for chemistry lessons.

Given the conditions at Stower Grange, of course, quite a number of boys spent all their school days there in a state of misery. I myself found my years at Stower Grange a time not of imprisonment but of liberation. While most of us, even those who tormented their contemporaries, crossed off the days on the calendar until they could go home, I would have preferred never to return to Bala at all. From the very first week, I realized that for all the adversities of the school it was my only escape route, and I immediately did all I could to find my way around its strange jumble of countless unwritten rules and the often almost carnivalesque lawlessness that prevailed. It was a great advantage that I soon began to distinguish myself on the rugby field, perhaps because a dull pain always present within me, although I was unaware of it at the time, enabled me to lower my head and make my way through ranks of oppo-



*"All I'm saying is that if God created man in his own image he was a bit of a cloner himself."*

nents better than any of my fellow-pupils. The fearlessness I displayed in rugger matches, as I remember them always played under a cold winter sky or in pouring rain, very soon gave me special status without my having to try for it by other means, such as recruiting vassals or enslaving weaker boys. Another crucial factor in my good progress at school was the fact that I never found reading and studying a burden. Far from it, for, confined as I had been until now to the Bible in Welsh and homiletic literature, it seemed as if a new door were opening whenever I turned a page. I read everything in the school library, and everything I could borrow from my teachers—works on geography and history, travel writings, novels, biographies. My mind thus gradually created a kind of ideal landscape in which the Arabian Desert, the realm of the Aztecs, the continent of Antarctica, the snow-covered Alps, the Northwest Passage, the River Congo, and the Crimean Peninsula formed a single panorama, populated by all the figures proper to those places. As I could move into that world at any time I liked—in a Latin lesson, during divine service, on the interminable weekends—I never fell into the depression from which so many of the boys at Stower Grange suffered. I felt miserable only when it was time to go home for the holidays. Even on my first return to Bala at half-term on All Saints' Day, I felt as if my life were once again under the unlucky star that had been my companion as long as I could remember.

Gwendolyn had gone further downhill during my two months' absence. She now lay in bed all day looking fixedly up at the ceiling. Elias came in to see her for a while every morning and every evening, but neither he nor Gwendolyn spoke a single word. It seems to me now, looking back, said Austerlitz, as if they were slowly being killed by the chill in their hearts. I don't know what kind of illness Gwendolyn died of, and I suspect that she herself could not have said. At least, she had no weapon against it but the curious compulsion that came over her several times a day to powder herself with a kind of cheap talc from a large container standing on the little table beside her bed. Gwendolyn used such quantities of this powder, fine as dust and slightly greasy, that the linoleum floor around her bed, and soon the whole room and the corridors of the upper story as well, were covered with a white layer, slightly sticky because of the damp air. The sickroom windows were kept closed, and the white powder that had settled on everything, grain by grain, and through which visible paths had now been trodden, was not at all like glittering snow. Rather, it resembled the ectoplasm that, as Evan had once told me, clairvoyants can produce from their mouths in great bubbles, which then fall to the ground, where they soon dry and fall to dust. No, it was not newly fallen snow wafting around the manse; what filled it was something unpleasant, and I did not know where it came from, only much later finding for it the completely incomprehensible but to me, said Austerlitz, immediately enlightening term "arsanical horror."

It was during the coldest winter in human memory that I came home for the second time from the school in Oswestry and found Gwendolyn barely alive. There was a coal fire smoldering in the hearth of her sickroom. The yellowish smoke that rose from the glowing coals and never entirely dispersed up the chimney mingled with the smell of carbolic pervading the whole house. I stood for hours at the window, studying the wonderful formations of icy mountain ranges two or three inches high formed above the crossbars by water running down the panes. Now and then, solitary figures emerged from the snowy landscape outside. Wrapped in dark scarves and shawls, umbrellas open to keep off the flurry of snowflakes, they stumbled up the hill. I heard them knocking the snow off their boots down in the porch before they slowly climbed the stairs, escorted by the neighbor's daughter who was now keeping house for the minister. With a certain hesitancy, and as if they had to bend underneath something, they stepped over the threshold and put whatever they had brought—a jar of pickled red cabbage, a can of corned beef, a bottle of rhubarb wine—down on the chest of drawers. Gwendolyn took no notice of these visitors, and the visitors themselves dared not look at her. They usually stood at the window with me for a little while, looking out, too, and sometimes cleared their

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SHOWCASE

# DEAD GIRLS

In 1967, the year Guy Bourdin launched a wickedly irreverent ad campaign for Charles Jourdan shoes, French *Vogue* published his graphically compelling photograph of two women with their noses and lips touching. Bourdin, who was born in Paris in 1928, worked for *Vogue* for more than thirty years, from 1955 to 1987, and for Jourdan until 1981. His pictures were charged with a kind of perverse sexuality that was remarkable for commercial photography at the time, although it is familiar enough now, in large part because Bourdin broke the taboos. Like William Klein, who began working for the more conservative American *Vogue* the year Bourdin was taken up by *Vogue* in Paris, he had a painter's eye and a penchant for narrative. Bourdin was influenced by the Surrealists, and his narratives usually involve body parts, stylized violence, allusions to pedophilia, and death. A woman tied to a tree à la St. Sebastian bleeds from the nipples, female hands covered in rings from Harry Winston embrace the naked back of what appears to be a barely pubescent girl, legs are bound across railroad tracks, bottles of perfume take on dildo-like properties. And then there are all those shoes, on feet attached to women who might be dead or who are about to do something that involves squatting. Bourdin died in 1991. He was slightly younger than Helmut Newton, but he became well known nearly a decade before Newton did, and he set the standard for the kinky fashion photograph. There were no books of Bourdin's work published while he was alive. Some people may be seeing his pictures for the first time at an exhibition that opens on September 6th at Pace/MacGill, to coincide with the publication of "Exhibit A: Guy Bourdin" (Bulfinch; $75).

—*Sharon DeLano*

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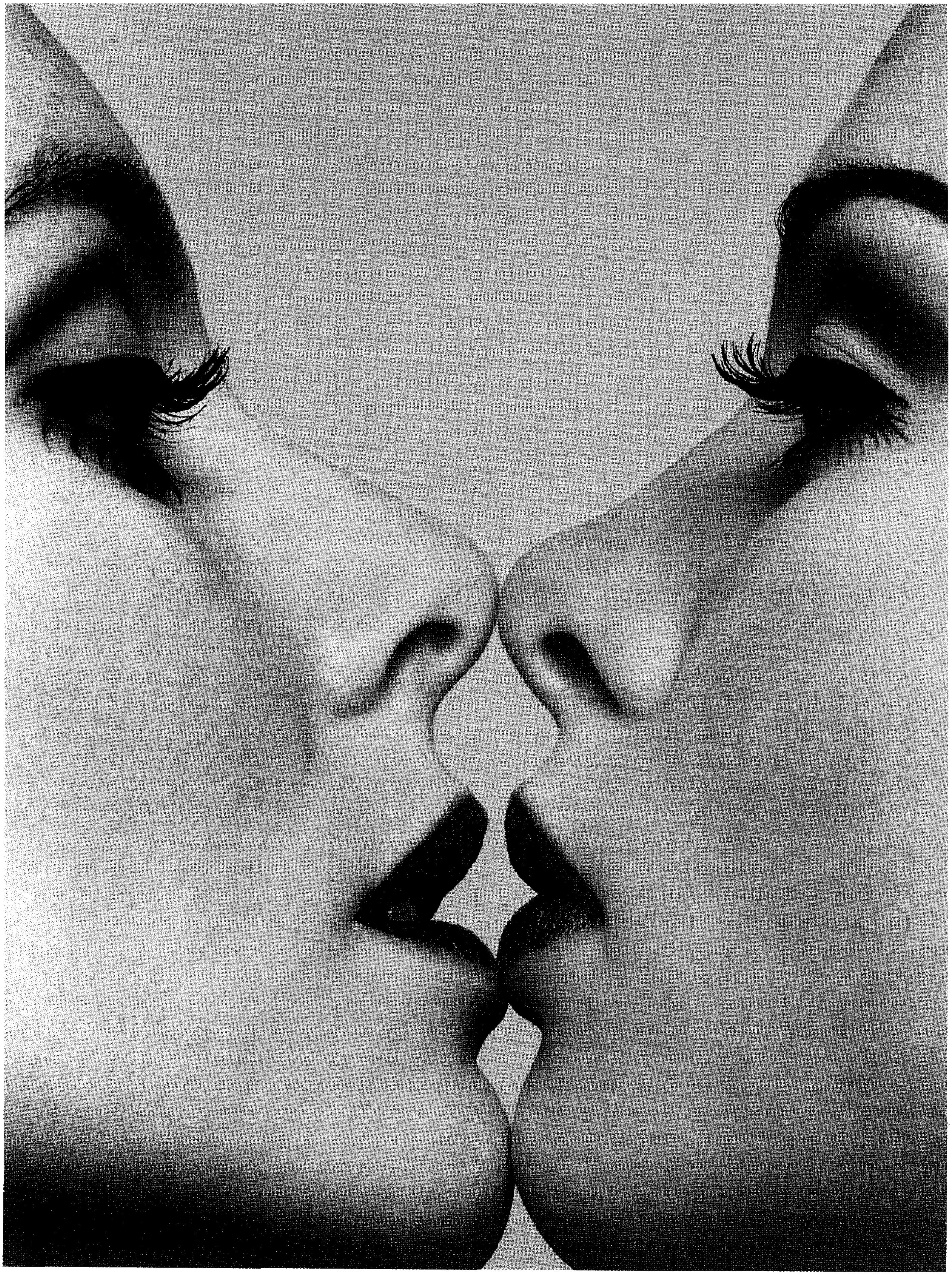
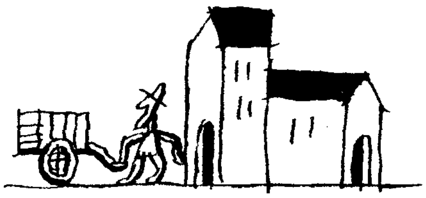


throats slightly. When they had gone again, it was as quiet as before except for the shallow breathing I could hear behind me, and an eternity seemed to pass between each breath.

On Christmas Day, making a great effort, Gwendolyn sat up in bed once more. Elias had brought her a cup of sweet tea, but she only moistened her lips with it. Then she said, so quietly that you could hardly hear her, What was it that so darkened our world? And Elias replied, I don't know, dear, I don't know. Gwendolyn lingered until the New Year. On Epiphany Day, however, she reached the final stage. The cold had grown stronger than ever outside, and it had become more and more silent. The whole country, so I heard later, came to a standstill that winter. Even Lake Bala, which I had thought as big as the ocean when I arrived in Wales, was covered by a thick sheet of ice. I thought of the roach and eels in its depths, and the birds that the visitors had told me were falling from the branches of the trees, frozen stiff. It was never really light in these days, and when at last, very far away, the sun shone faintly in the misty blue sky, the dying woman opened her eyes wide and would not move her glance from the weak light filtering through the windowpanes. Only when darkness fell did she lower her lids, and not long after that a gurgling sound began to emerge from her throat with every breath she took. I sat beside her all night, together with the minister. At dawn, the stertorous breathing stopped. Gwendolyn's body arched slightly and then sank back again. It was a kind of tensing movement; I had felt it once before, when I picked up an injured rabbit from the headland of a field, and its heart stopped in my hand for fear. But directly after she had arched herself in death Gwendolyn's body seemed to shrink a little, reminding me of what Evan had told me. I saw her eyes sink back in their sockets, and her thin lips, now stretched tautly back, half-bared her crooked bottom teeth, while outside, for the first time in many days, the rose-colored light of dawn touched the rooftops of Bala.

I don't remember exactly how the rest of that day passed after she died, said Austerlitz. I think I was so exhausted that I lay down and slept very deeply for a very long time. When I got up again, Gwendolyn was already in her coffin, which stood on the four mahogany chairs in the front room. She was wearing her wedding dress, kept all these years in a trunk upstairs, and a pair of white gloves with a great many little mother-of-pearl buttons which I had never seen before. The sight of them brought tears into my eyes, the first tears I had ever shed in the manse. Elias was sitting beside the coffin keeping watch over the dead woman, while on his own out in the empty barn, which creaked with the frost, the young assistant minister who had ridden over from Corwen on a pony was rehearsing the sermon he would preach on the day of the funeral.

Elias never recovered from his wife's death. Grief is not the right word for the condition into which he had fallen since she lay dying, said Austerlitz. Although I did not understand it as a boy of thirteen, I can see now that the unhappiness building up inside him had destroyed his faith just when he needed it most. When I came home again in the summer, it was weeks since he had been able to carry out his duties as a minister. He climbed into the pulpit once more, opened the Bible, and in a broken voice, as if reading to himself alone, announced his text from Lamentations: "He has made me dwell in darkness as those who have been long dead." Elias did not preach the sermon itself. He merely stood there for a while, looking out over the heads of his congregation, who were paralyzed by alarm, with what seemed to me the motionless eyes of one blinded. Then he slowly climbed down from the pulpit and left the chapel. He was taken away to Denbigh before the end of that summer. I visited him there only once, just before Christmas, with one of the elders of the congregation. The patients were accommodated in a large stone building, and I remember, said Austerlitz, that we had to wait in a room painted green. After a quarter of an hour or so, an attendant came and took us up to Elias, who was lying in a bed with railings, his face to the wall. The attendant said, Your son's here to see you, *parech*, but even when he was addressed a second and a third time Elias did not answer. When we left the ward again, one of the other inmates, a gray little man with tangled hair, plucked my sleeve and whispered behind his hand, He's not the full shilling, you know—which at the time, curiously enough, said Austerlitz, I felt was a reassuring diagnosis and made the whole wretched situation tolerable.

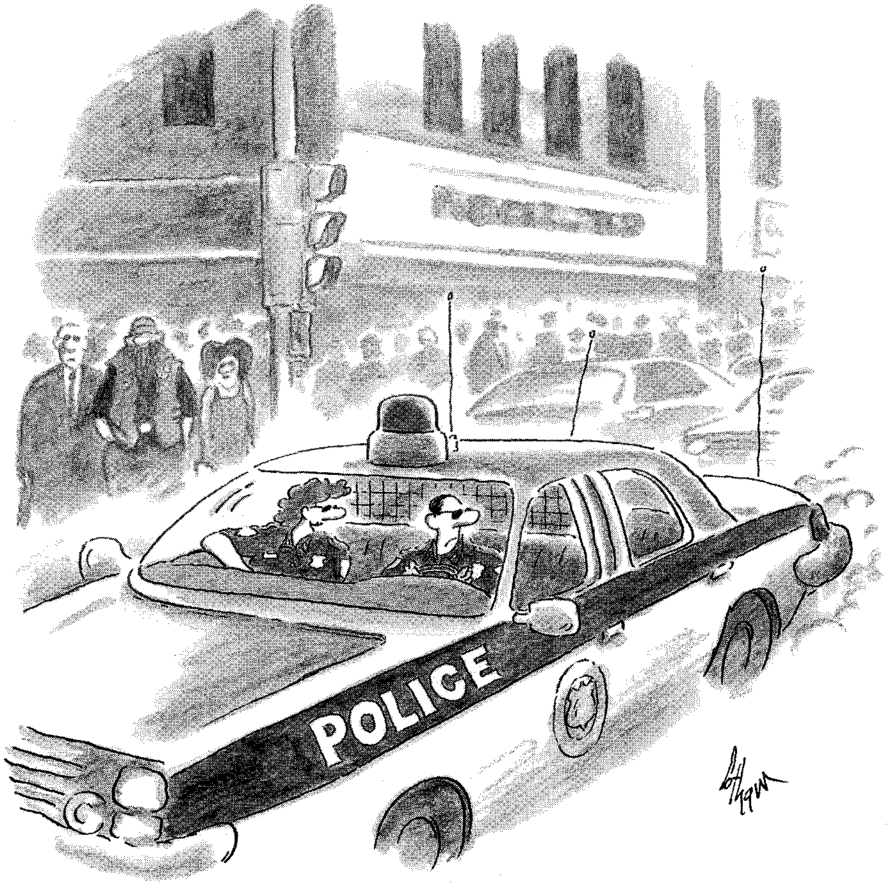


More than a year after my visit to the Denbigh asylum, at the beginning of the summer term of 1949, when we were just preparing for the exams that would determine our subsequent careers, said Austerlitz, the headmaster, Penrith-Smith, summoned me to his study one morning. I can still see him in his frayed gown, wreathed in the blue tobacco smoke from his pipe, standing in the sunlight that slanted in through the small panes of the lead-glazed window and repeating several times in various ways, in his typically confused manner, that in the circumstances my conduct had been exemplary, truly exemplary, given the events of the last two years, and if in the next few weeks I came up to my teachers' expectations of me, which were undoubtedly justified, the Stower Grange trustees would award me a sixth-form scholarship. First, however, it was his duty to tell me that I must put not Dafydd Elias but Jacques Austerlitz on my exam papers. It appears, said Penrith-Smith, that this is your real name. My foster parents, with whom he had discussed the matter at length when I entered the school, had meant to tell me about my origins in good time before the examinations, and if possible to adopt me, but as matters now stood, said Penrith-Smith, that was unfortunately out of the question. All he knew himself was that the Eliases had taken me into their house at the beginning of the war, when I was only a little boy, so he could tell me no more. He was sure it would all be settled once Elias's condition improved. As far as the other boys are concerned, said Penrith-Smith, you remain Dafydd Elias for the time being. There's no need to let anyone know. It's just that you will have to put Jacques Austerlitz on your examination papers or else your work may be considered invalid. Penrith-Smith had written the name on a piece of paper, and when he handed it to me I could think of nothing to say, said Austerlitz, but Thank you, sir.

At first, what disconcerted me most was that I could connect no ideas at all with the word "Austerlitz." If my new name had been Morgan or Jones, I could have related it to reality. I even knew the name Jacques from a French nursery rhyme. But I had never heard of an Austerlitz before, and from the first I was convinced that no one else bore that name, no one in Wales, or in the Isles, or anywhere else in the world. And since I began investigating my own history, some years ago, I have never in fact come upon another Austerlitz, not in the telephone books of London or Paris, Amsterdam or Antwerp. But not long ago, turning on the wireless, I happened upon an announcer saying that Fred Astaire, of whom I had previously known nothing at all, was born with the surname of Austerlitz. Astaire's father, who according to this surprising radio program came from Vienna, had worked as a master brewer in Omaha, Nebraska, where Astaire was born, and from the veranda of the Austerlitz family's house you could hear freight trains being shunted back and forth in the city's marshalling yard. Astaire is reported to have said later that this constant, uninterrupted shunting sound, and the ideas it suggested of going on a long railroad journey, were his only early childhood memories. And just a couple of days after I chanced in this way upon the story of a man entirely unknown to me, Austerlitz added, a neighbor who describes herself as a passionate reader told me that in Kafka's diaries she had found a small, bowlegged man of my own name who, as Kafka recorded, had been called in to circumcise his nephew.

But personally, as I was saying, I had never heard the name Austerlitz before that April day in 1949 when Penrith-Smith handed me the piece of paper on which he had written it. I couldn't work out the spelling, and read the strange term, which sounded to me like some password, three or four times, syllable by syllable, before I looked up and said, Excuse me, sir, but what does it mean? To which Penrith-Smith replied, I think you will find it is a small place in Moravia, site of a famous battle, you know. And sure enough, the Moravian village of Austerlitz was discussed at great length during the next school year, for the curriculum in the Lower Sixth included European history, generally regarded as a complicated and not entirely safe subject, so that as a rule it was confined to the period from 1789 to 1814, which ended with a great English victory.

The master who was to teach us this period—both glorious and terrible, as he often emphasized—was one André Hilary, who had only just taken up his post at Stower Grange after being demobbed and who, as it soon turned out, was familiar with every detail of the Napoleonic era. André Hilary had studied at Oriel College but had grown up surrounded by an enthusiasm for Napoleon going back through several generations of his family. His father, so he once told me, said Austerlitz, had him baptized André in memory of Marshal Masséna, Duke of Rivoli. Hilary could trace the orbit of the Corsican comet, as he put it, across the sky from its very beginning to its extinction in the South Atlantic Ocean, enumerating all the constellations through which it passed, speaking without any preparation and just as if he had been there himself. Most of us were deeply impressed by Hilary's history lessons, not least, said Austerlitz, because very often, probably owing to his suffering from slipped disks, he gave them while lying on his back on the floor, nor did we find this at all comic, for it was at such times that Hilary spoke with particular clarity and authority. His undoubted pièce de résistance was the Battle of Austerlitz. He spoke on it at length, describing the terrain, the highway leading east from Brünn to Olmütz, with the hilly Moravian countryside on its left and the Pratzen heights on its right, the curious cone-shaped mountain that reminded the veterans in the Napoleonic Army of the Egyptian pyramids. Hilary told us, said Austerlitz, how at seven in the morning the peaks of the highest hills emerged from the mist like is-



*"Admit it—you don't know your whereabouts."*

• •

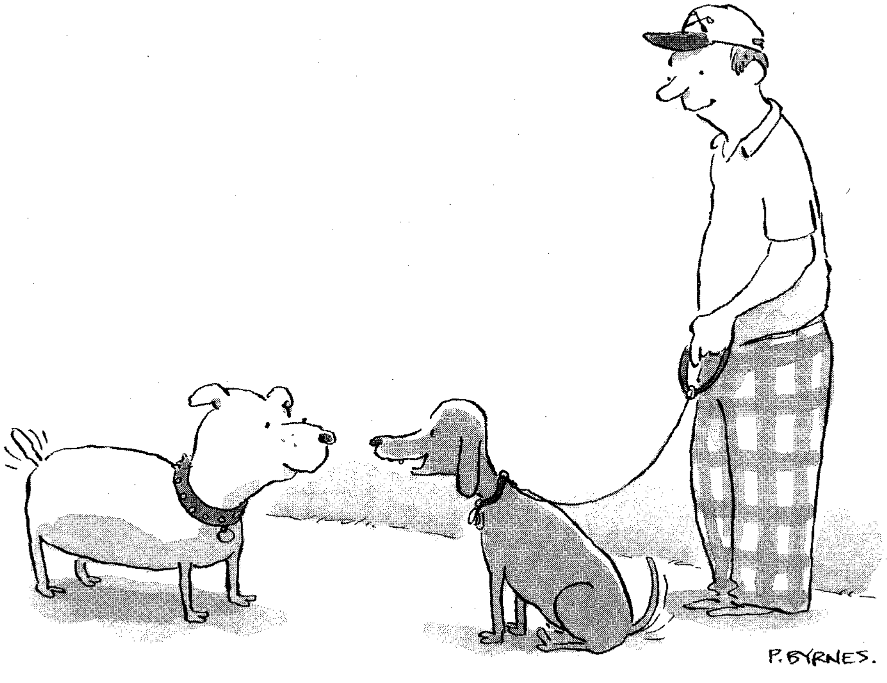
lands in a sea, and as day gradually grew brighter over the rounded hilltops the milky haze in the valleys became noticeably denser. The Russian and Austrian troops had come down from the mountainsides like a slow avalanche, and soon, increasingly unsure where they were going, were wandering around on the slopes and in the meadows below, while the French, in a single onslaught, captured the now half-abandoned positions on the Pratzen heights and then proceeded to attack the enemy in the rear from that vantage point.

Hilary painted us a picture of the disposition of the regiments in their white-and-red, green, and blue uniforms, constantly forming into new patterns in the course of the battle like crystals of glass in a kaleidoscope. We saw the black clouds of smoke hovering over the guns, the cannonballs flying past above the heads of the troops, the glint of bayonets as the first rays of the sun penetrated the mist; we even seemed to hear the heavy cavalry clashing, and felt (like a weakness sensed in our own bodies) whole ranks of men collapsing beneath the surge of the oncoming force. Hilary could talk for hours about December 2, 1805, but nonetheless it was his opinion that he had to cut his accounts far too short, because, as he several times told us, it would take an endless length of time to describe the events of such a day properly, in some inconceivably complex form recording who had perished, who survived, and exactly where and how, or simply saying what the battlefield was like at nightfall, with the screams and groans of the wounded and dying. In the end, all anyone could ever do was sum up the unknown factors in the ridiculous phrase "The fortunes of battle swayed this way and that," or some similarly feeble and useless cliché. All of us, even when we think we have noted every tiny detail, resort to set pieces that have already been staged often enough by others. We try to reproduce the reality, but the harder we try, the more we find the pictures that make up the stock-in-trade of the spectacle of history forcing themselves upon us: the fallen drummer boy, the infantryman shown in the act of stabbing another, the horse's eye staring from its socket, the invulnerable Emperor surrounded by his generals, a moment frozen still amid the turmoil of battle.

Our concern with history, so Hilary's thesis ran, is a concern with preformed images already imprinted on our brains, images at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered. I myself, added Austerlitz, in spite of all the accounts of it I have read, remember only the picture of the final defeat of the Allies in the battle of the Three Emperors. Every attempt to understand the course of events inevitably turns into that one scene where the hosts of Russian and Austrian soldiers are fleeing on foot and horseback onto the frozen Satschan ponds. I see cannonballs suspended for an eternity in the air, I see others crashing into the ice, I see the unfortunate victims flinging up their arms as they slide from the toppling floes, and I see them, strangely, not with my own eyes but with those of short-sighted Marshal Davout, who has made a forced march with his regiments from Vienna and, glasses tied firmly behind his head with two laces, looks like an early motorist or aviator.

The more often Hilary mentioned the word "Austerlitz" in front of the class, the more it really did become my own name, and the more clearly I thought I saw that what had at first seemed like an ignominious flaw was changing into a bright light always hovering before me, as promising as the sun of Austerlitz itself when it rose above the December mists. All that school year, I felt as if I had been chosen, and although, as I also knew, such a belief in no way matched my uncertain status, I have held fast to it almost my whole life. I don't think that any of my fellow-pupils at Stower Grange knew my new name, and the masters, who had been informed of my double identity by Penrith-Smith, went on calling me Elias, too. André Hilary was the only one to whom I myself told my real name. It was soon after we had handed in an essay on the concepts of empire and nation that Hilary summoned me to his study outside regular school hours to return my work, which he had marked with a triple-starred A. He wondered whether I had perhaps been initiated into historical studies at home by my father or an elder brother. When I answered Hilary's question, I had some difficulty in not losing my command over myself, and it was in this situation, which I felt I could no longer endure, that I told him the secret of my real name. It was some time before he was able to calm down. He struck his forehead again and again, breaking into exclamations of astonishment, as if providence had finally sent him the pupil he had always wanted.

For the rest of my time at Stower Grange, Hilary supported and encouraged me in every possible way. I owe it to him first and foremost, said Austerlitz,



*"He's a true friend and companion and, should it ever come to it, meat."*

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ed after my wishes, led me
e first floor and showed
m containing a great deal
velvet, brocade, and dark
rniture, where I sat until almost three in the morning at a secretaire faintly illuminated by the street lighting—the cast-iron radiator clicked quietly, and only occasionally did a black cab drive past outside in Liverpool Street—writing down, in the form of notes and disconnected sentences, as much as possible of what Austerlitz had told me that evening.

Almost a quarter of a year had passed before I next went to London and visited Austerlitz in his house in Alderney Road. On our parting in December, we had agreed that I would wait to receive news from him. As the weeks went by, I had felt less and less sure whether I would ever hear from him again, fearing at various times that I might have made a thoughtless remark or offended him in some other way. It also occurred to me that, following his old custom, he might simply have gone away with some unknown purpose in mind and for an indefinite period. Had I realized at the time that for Austerlitz certain moments had no beginning or end, while on the other hand his whole life had sometimes seemed to him a blank point without duration, I would probably have waited more patiently. But, at any rate, one day my mail included a picture postcard from the nineteen-twenties or thirties showing a camp of white tents in the Egyptian desert, a picture taken during a campaign now remembered by no one, the message on the back saying merely "Saturday 19 March, Alderney Road," followed by a question mark and a capital "A" for Austerlitz.

Alderney Road is quite a long way out in the East End of London. It is a remarkably quiet street, running parallel to the main road not far from the Mile End junction, where there are always traffic jams and where, on such Saturdays, market traders set up their stalls of clothes and fabrics on the pavements. Thinking back now, I see again a low block of flats like a fortress standing on the corner of the street; a garish green kiosk with its wares openly laid out, although I never saw anyone behind the counter; a cast-iron fence round a patch of grass on which you might think no one had ever trodden; and the brick wall on the right, about fifty yards long and as tall as a man. At the end of it, I found the house where Austerlitz lived, the first in a row of six or seven.

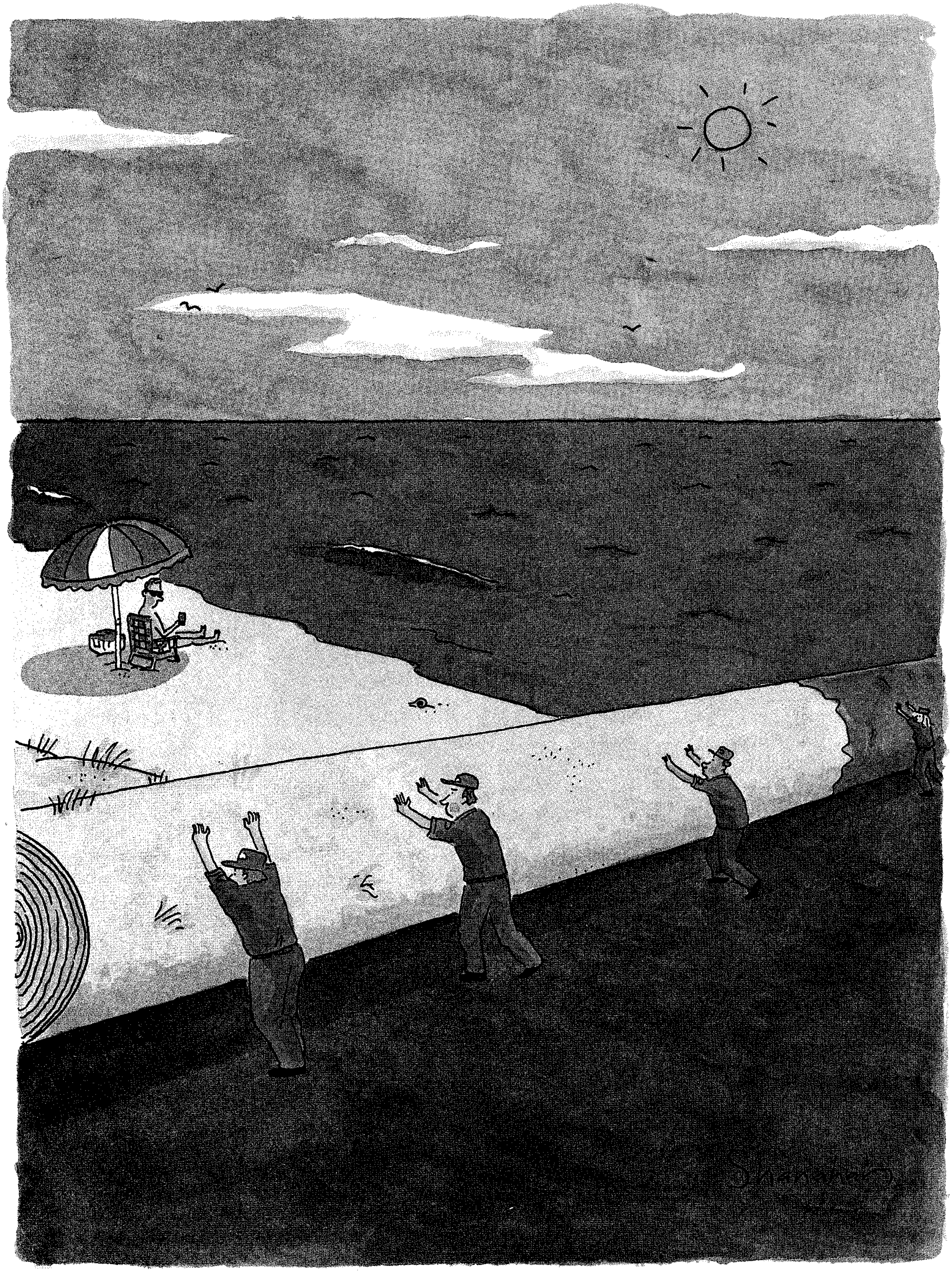
The interior, which appeared to be very spacious, contained only the most essential furniture and no curtains or carpets. The walls were painted a pale shade of matte gray, and the floorboards were also gray, but of a rather darker hue. Apart from what seemed to me a curiously elongated, old-fashioned ottoman, the front room, into which Austerlitz took me first, had nothing in it but a large table, also painted matte gray, with several dozen photographs lying on it, most of them dating quite a long way back and rather worn at the edges. Austerlitz told me that he sometimes sat here for hours, laying out these photographs the wrong way up, as if playing a game of patience, and that then, one by one, he turned them over, always with a new sense of surprise at what he saw, pushing the pictures back and forth and over each other, arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblances, or withdrawing them from the game until either there was nothing left but the gray tabletop or he felt exhausted by the constant effort of thinking and remembering and had to rest on the ottoman. I often lie here until late in the evening, feeling time roll back, said Austerlitz, as we passed into the back room on the ground floor, where he lit the little gas fire and invited me to sit down on one of the chairs standing on either side of the hearth. This room, too, contained hardly any furniture; there were just the gray floorboards and the walls on which the light of the flickering blue flames was now cast in the gathering dusk.

Where, said Austerlitz, shall I take up my story? When I came back from France, I bought this house for what today is the positively ridiculous sum of nine hundred and fifty pounds, and then I taught for almost thirty years, until I took early retirement, in 1991, partly because of the inexorable spread of ignorance even to the universities, and partly because I hoped to set out on paper my investigations in the history of architecture and civilization, as had long been my intention. I might perhaps, Austerlitz said to me, have had some idea since our first conversations in Antwerp of the extent of his interests, the drift of his ideas, and the nature of his observations and comments, always made extempore or first recorded in provisional form but eventually covering thousands of pages. Even in Paris, said Austerlitz, I had thought of collecting my fragmentary studies in a book, although I constantly postponed writing it. The various ideas I entertained at different times of this book I was to write ranged from the concept of a systematically descriptive work in several volumes to a series of essays. However, even a first glance at the papers I had brought here from the institute to Alderney Road showed that they consisted largely of sketches that now seemed misguided, distorted, and of little use. I began to assemble and recast anything that still passed muster in order to re-create before my own eyes, as if in the pages of an album, the picture of the landscape, now almost immersed in oblivion, through which my journey had taken me.

But the more I labored on this project, over several months, the more pitiful did the results seem. I was increasingly overcome by a sense of aversion and distaste, said Austerlitz, at the mere thought of opening the bundles of papers and looking through the endless reams I had written in the course of the years. Yet reading and writing, he added, had always been his favorite occupation. How happily, said Austerlitz, have I sat over a book in the deepening twilight until I could no longer make out the words and my mind began to wander, and how secure I have felt seated at the desk in my house in the dark night, just watching the tip of my pencil in the lamplight following its shadow, as if of its own accord and with perfect fidelity, while that shadow moved regularly from left to right, line by line, over the ruled paper. But now I found writing such hard going that it often took me a whole day to compose a single sentence, and no sooner had I thought such a sentence out, with the greatest effort, and written it down, than I saw the awkward falsity of my constructions and the inadequacy of all the words I had employed. Soon I could not even venture on the first step. Like a tightrope walker who has forgotten how to put one foot in front of the other, all I felt was the swaying of the precarious structure on which I stood, stricken with terror at the realization that the ends of the balancing pole gleaming far out on the edges of my field of vision were no longer my guiding lights, as before, but malignant enticements to me to cast myself into the depths. Now and then, a train of thought did succeed in emerging with wonderful clarity inside my head, but I knew even as it formed that I was in no position to record it, for as soon as I so much as picked up my pencil the endless possibilities of language, to which I could once safely abandon myself, became a conglomeration of the most inane phrases. There was not an expression in the sentence but it proved to be a miserable crutch, not a word but it sounded false and hollow. It was as if an illness that had been latent in me for a long time were now threatening to erupt, as if some soul-destroying and inexorable force had fastened upon me and would gradually paralyze my entire system. I already felt in my head the dreadful torpor that heralds disintegration of the personality, I sensed that in truth I had neither memory nor the power of thought, nor even any existence, that all my life had been a constant process of obliteration, a turning away from myself and the world. If someone had come then to lead me away to a place of execution, I would have gone meekly, without a word, without so much as opening my eyes, just as people who suffer from violent seasickness will not offer the slightest resistance should someone tell them that they are about to be thrown overboard.

Whatever was going on within me, said Austerlitz, soon extended to what in itself is the simpler business of reading, until if I attempted to read a whole page I inevitably fell into a state of the greatest confusion. If language may be regarded as an old city full of streets and squares, nooks and crannies, with some quarters dating from far back in time while others have been torn down, cleaned up, and rebuilt, and with suburbs reaching further and further into the surrounding country, then I was like a man who has been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this

## SKETCHBOOK BY DANNY SHANAHAN



JE NE REGRETTE RIEN

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urban sprawl anymore, no longer knows what a bus stop is for, or what a back yard is, or a street junction, an avenue, or a bridge. The entire structure of language, the syntactical arrangement of parts of speech, punctuation, conjunctions, and finally even the nouns denoting ordinary objects were all enveloped in impenetrable fog. I could not even understand what I myself had written in the past—perhaps I could understand that least of all. All I could think was that such a sentence only appears to mean something but in truth is at best a makeshift expedient, a kind of unhealthy growth issuing from our ignorance, something that we use, in the same way as many sea plants and animals use their tentacles, to grope blindly through the darkness enveloping us. One evening, said Austerlitz, I gathered up all my papers, bundled or loose, my notepads and exercise books, my files and lecture notes, anything with my writing on it, and carried the entire collection out of the house to the far end of the garden, where I threw it on the compost heap and buried it under layers of rotted leaves and spadefuls of earth. For several weeks afterward, while I turned out the rooms of my house and repainted the floors and walls, I did think I felt some relief from the burden weighing down on my life, but I soon realized that the shadows were falling over me. Especially in the evening twilight, which had always been my favorite time of day, I was overcome by a sense of anxiety, diffuse at first and then growing ever denser, through which the lovely spectacle of fading colors turned to a malevolent and lightless pallor, my heart felt constricted in my chest to a quarter of its natural size, until at last there remained only one idea in my head: I must go to the third-floor landing of a certain building in Great Portland Street, where I had once had a strange turn after visiting a doctor's surgery, and throw myself over the bannisters into the dark depths of the stairwell.

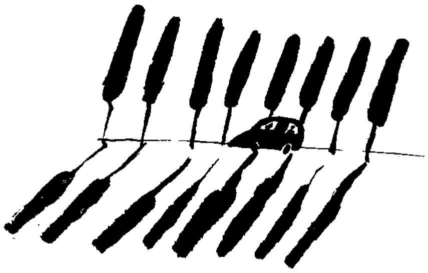
It was impossible for me then to go and see any of my friends, who were not numerous in any case, or mix with other people in any normal way. The mere idea of listening to anyone brought on a wave of revulsion, while the thought of talking myself, said Austerlitz, was perhaps worse still, and as this state of affairs continued I came to realize how isolated I was and always have been, among the Welsh as much as among the English and French. It never occurred to me to wonder about my true origins, said Austerlitz, nor did I ever feel that I belonged to a certain social class, professional group, or religious confession. I was as ill at ease among artists and intellectuals as in bourgeois life, and it was a very long time since I had felt able to make personal friendships. No sooner did I become acquainted with someone than I feared I had come too close, no sooner did someone turn toward me than I began to retreat. In the end, I was linked to other people only by certain forms of courtesy which I took to extremes and which I know today, said Austerlitz, I observed not so much for the sake of their recipients as because they allowed me to ignore the fact that my life has always, for as far back as I can remember, been overcast by an unrelieved desperation. It was then that I began my nocturnal wanderings through London, to escape the insomnia that increasingly tormented me.

For more than a year, I think, said Austerlitz, I would leave my house as darkness fell. It is a fact that you can traverse this vast city almost from end to end on foot in a single night, said Austerlitz, and once you are used to walking alone and meeting only a few nocturnal spectres on your way, you soon begin to wonder why, apparently because of some agreement concluded long ago, Londoners of all ages lie in their beds in those countless buildings in Greenwich, Bayswater, or Kensington, under a safe roof, as they suppose, while really they are only stretched out with their faces turned to the earth in fear, like those travellers of the past resting on their way through the desert. My wanderings took me to the most remote areas of London, into outlying parts of the metropolis which I would never otherwise have seen, and when dawn came I would go back to Whitechapel on the Underground, together with all the other poor souls who flow from the suburbs toward the center at that time of day. As I passed through the stations, I thought several times that among the passengers coming toward me in the tiled passages, on the escalators plunging steeply into the depths, or behind the gray windows of a train just pulling out, I saw a face known to me from some much earlier part of my life, but I could never say whose it was. These familiar faces always had something different from the rest about them, something I might almost call indistinct, and on occasion they would haunt and disturb me for days on end. In fact, at this time, usually when I came home from my nocturnal excursions I began seeing what might be described as shapes and colors of diminished corporeality through a drifting veil or cloud of smoke, images from a faded world: a squadron of yachts putting out into the shadows over the sea from the glittering Thames estuary in the evening light, a horse-drawn cab in Spitalfields driven by a man in a top hat, a woman wearing the dress of the nineteen-thirties and casting her eyes down as she passed me by. It was at moments of particular weakness, when I thought I could not go on any longer, that my senses played these tricks on me. It sometimes seemed to me as if the noises of the city were dying down around me and the traffic were flowing silently down the street, or as if someone had plucked me by the sleeve. And I would hear people behind my back speaking in a foreign tongue, Lithuanian, Hungarian, or something else with a very alien note to it, or so I thought, said Austerlitz.

I had several such experiences in Liverpool Street Station, to which I was always irresistibly drawn back on my night journeys. Before work began to rebuild it, at the end of the nineteen-eighties, this station, with its main concourse fifteen to twenty feet below street level, was one of the darkest and most sinister places in London, a kind of entrance to the underworld, as it has often been described. The ballast between the tracks, the cracked sleepers, the brick walls with their stone bases, the cornices and panes of the tall windows, the wooden kiosks for the ticket inspectors, and the towering cast-iron columns with their palmate capitals were all covered in a greasy black layer formed, over the course of a century, by coke dust and soot, steam, sulfur, and diesel oil. Even on sunny days, only a faint grayness, scarcely illuminated at all by the globes of the station lights, came through the glass roof over the main hall, and in this eternal dusk, which was full of a muffled babble of voices, a quiet scraping and trampling of feet, innumerable people passed in great tides, disembarking from the trains or boarding them, coming together, moving apart, and being held up at barriers and bottlenecks like water against a weir. Whenever I got out at Liverpool Street Station on my way back to the East End, said Austerlitz, I would stay there at least a couple of hours, sitting on a bench with other passengers already tired in the early morning, or standing somewhere, leaning on a handrail and feeling that constant wrenching inside me, a kind of heartache that, as I was beginning to sense, was caused by the vortex of past time.

I knew that on the site where the station stood marshy meadows had once extended to the city walls, meadows that froze over for months on end in the cold winters of the so-called Little Ice Age, and that Londoners used to strap bone runners under their shoes, skating there as the people of Antwerp skated on the Schelde, sometimes going on until midnight in the flickering light of the bonfires burning here and there on the ice in heavy braziers. Until the seventeenth century, Austerlitz continued, the priory of the order of St. Mary of Bethlehem stood on the site of the present main station concourse and the Great Eastern Hotel. It had been founded by a certain Simon FitzMary in gratitude for his miraculous rescue from the hands of the Saracens when he was on a crusade, so that the pious brothers and sisters could pray henceforward for the salvation of the founder's soul and the souls of his ancestors, his descendants, and all those related to him. The hospital for the insane and other destitute persons which has gone down in history under the name of Bedlam also belonged to the priory outside Bishopsgate.

Whenever I was in the station, said Austerlitz, I kept almost obsessively trying to imagine—through the ever-changing maze of walls—the location in that huge space of the rooms where the asylum inmates were confined, and I often wondered whether the pain and suffering accumulated on this site over the centuries had ever really ebbed away, or whether they might not still, as I sometimes thought when I felt a cold breath of air on my forehead, be sensed as we cross them on our way through the station halls and up and down the flights of steps. Or I imagined the bleachfields stretching westward from Bedlam, saw the white lengths of linen spread out on the green grass and the diminutive figures of weavers and washerwomen, and on the far side of the bleachfields the places where the dead were buried once the churchyards of London could hold no more. When space becomes too cramped, the dead, like the living, move out into less densely populated districts where they can rest at a decent distance from each other. But more and more keep coming, a never-ending succession of them, and in the end, when the space is entirely occupied, graves are dug through existing graves to accommodate them, until all the bones in the cemetery lie jumbled up together. At Broad Street Station, built in 1865 on the site of the former burial grounds and bleachfields, excavations during the demolition work of 1984 brought to light more than four hundred skeletons underneath a taxi rank. I went there quite often at the time, said Austerlitz, partly because of my interest in architectural history and partly for other reasons that I could not explain even to myself, and I took photographs of the remains of the dead. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the city had grown above these strata of soil, mingled with the dust and bones of decayed bodies, into a warren of putrid streets and houses for the poorest Londoners, cobbled together out of beams, clods of clay, and any other building material that came to hand. Around 1860 and 1870, before work on the construction of the two northeast terminals began, these poverty-stricken quarters were forcibly cleared and vast quantities of soil, together with the bones buried in them, were dug up and removed, so that the railway lines, which on the engineers' plans looked like muscles and sinews in an anatomical atlas, could be brought to the outskirts of the City.

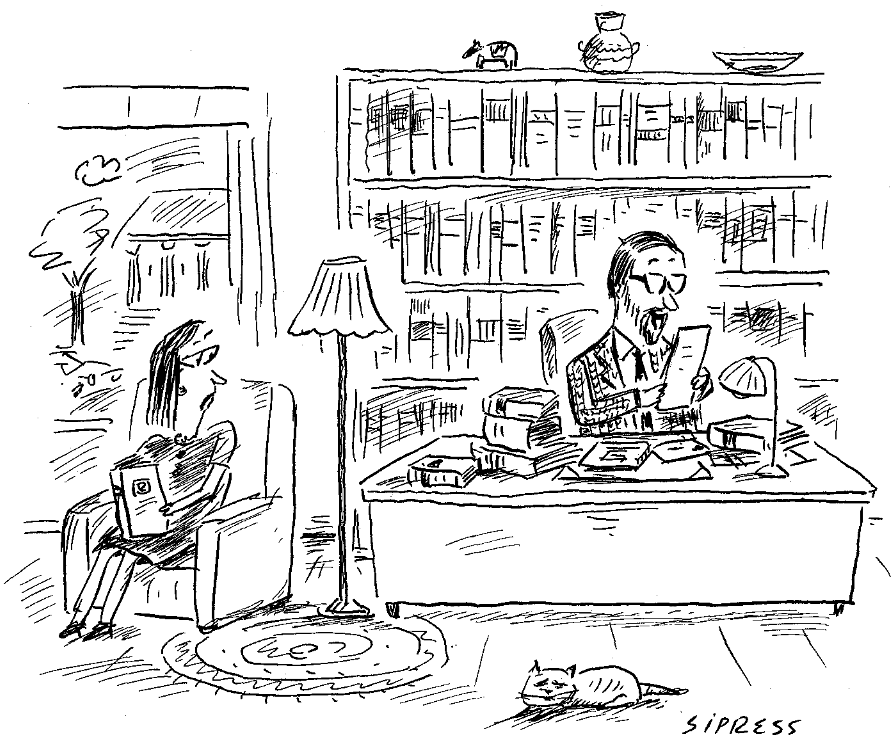


As for me, said Austerlitz, I felt at this time as if the dead were returning from their exile and filling the twilight around me with their strangely slow but incessant to-ing and fro-ing. I remember, for instance, that one quiet Sunday morning I was sitting on a bench on the particularly gloomy platform at Liverpool Street Station where the boat trains from Harwich came in, watching a man who wore a snow-white turban with his shabby porter's uniform as he wielded a broom, sweeping up the rubbish scattered on the paving. In doing this job, which in its pointlessness reminded me of the eternal punishments that we are told, said Austerlitz, we must endure after death, the white-turbanned porter, oblivious of all around, performed the same movements over and over again using, instead of a proper dustpan, a cardboard box with one side removed, and nudging it along in front of him with his foot, first up the platform and then down again until he had returned to his point of departure, a low doorway in the builders' fence reaching up to the second story of the interior façade of the station. He had emerged from this doorway half an hour ago and now disappeared through it again, with an odd jerk, as it seemed to me.

To this day, I cannot explain what made me follow him, said Austerlitz. We take almost all the decisive steps in our lives as a result of slight inner adjustments of which we are barely conscious. But, in any case, that Sunday morning I suddenly found myself on the other side of the tall fence, facing the entrance to the Ladies' Waiting Room, the existence of which, in this remote part of the station, had been quite unknown to me. The man in the turban was nowhere to be seen, and there was no one on the scaffolding, either. I hesitated to approach the swing doors, but as soon as I had taken hold of the brass handle I stepped past a heavy curtain hung on the inside to keep out drafts, and entered the large room, which had obviously been disused for years. I felt, said Austerlitz, like an actor who, upon making his entrance, has completely and irrevocably forgotten not only the lines he knew by heart but the very part he has so often played.

Minutes or even hours may have passed while I stood in that empty space beneath a ceiling that seemed to float at a vertiginous height, unable to move from the spot, with my face raised to the icy gray light, like moonshine, which came through the windows in a gallery beneath the vaulted roof, and hung above me like a tight-meshed net or a piece of thin, fraying fabric. When the blanket of cloud above the city parted for a moment or two, occasional rays of light fell into the waiting room, but they were generally extinguished again halfway down. Other beams of light followed curious trajectories that violated the laws of physics, departing from the rectilinear and twisting in spirals and eddies before being swallowed up by the wavering shadows. From time to time, and just for a split second, I saw huge halls open up, with rows of pillars and colonnades leading far into the distance, with vaults and brickwork arches bearing on them many-storied structures, with flights of stone steps, wooden stairways, and ladders, all leading the eye on and on. I saw viaducts and footbridges crossing deep chasms thronged with tiny figures who looked to me, said Austerlitz, like prisoners in search of some way of escape from their dungeon, and the longer I stared upward with my head wrenched painfully back, the more I felt as if the room where I stood were expanding, going on forever and ever in an improbably foreshortened perspective, at the same time turning back into itself in a way possible only in such a deranged universe. Once I thought that very far away I saw a dome of openwork masonry, with a parapet around it on which grew ferns, young willows, and various other shrubs where herons had built their large, untidy nests, and I saw the birds spread their great wings and fly away through the blue air. I remember, said Austerlitz, that in the middle of this vision of imprisonment and liberation I could not stop wondering whether it was a ruin or a building in the process of construction I had entered. Both ideas were right in a way at the time, since the new station was literally rising from the ruins of the old Liverpool Street; in any case, the crucial point was hardly this speculation in itself, which was really only a distraction, but the scraps of memory beginning to drift through the outlying regions of my mind. Memories came back to me in the disused Ladies' Waiting Room of Liverpool Street Station, memories behind and within which many things much further back in the past seemed to lie, all interlocking like the labyrinthine vaults I saw in the dusty gray light, and which seemed to go on and on forever.

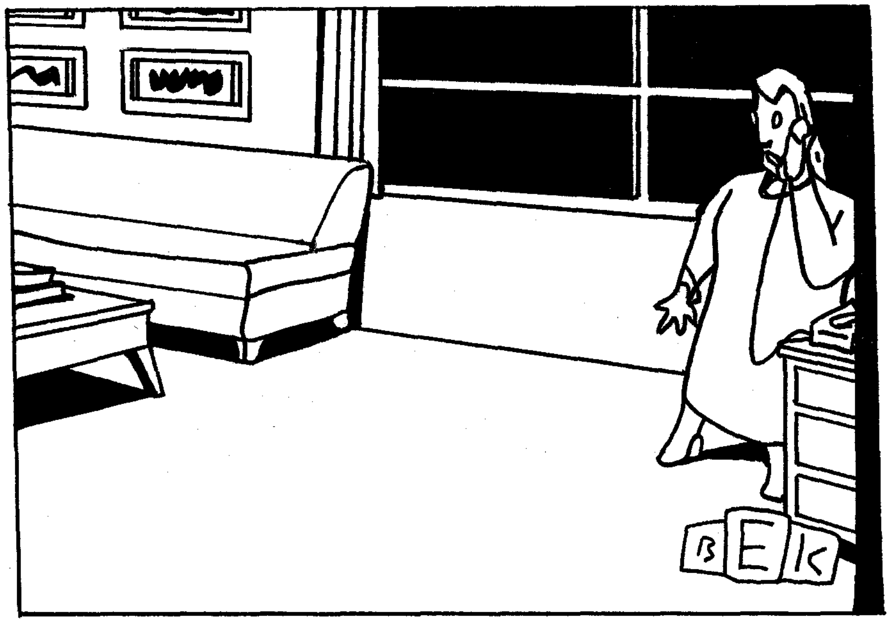
In fact, I felt, said Austerlitz, that the waiting room where I stood as if dazzled contained all the hours of my past life, all the suppressed and extinguished fears and wishes I had ever entertained, as if the black-and-white diamond pat-



*"I've been invited to address a conference of professors of twentieth-century American literature who are sleeping with their students."*

tern of the stone slabs beneath my feet were the board on which the endgame would be played, and it covered the entire plane of time. Perhaps that is why, in the gloomy light of the waiting room, I also saw two middle-aged people dressed in the style of the thirties, a woman in a light gabardine coat with a hat at an angle on her head, and a thin man beside her wearing a dark suit and a dog collar. And I not only saw the minister and his wife, said Austerlitz, but also the boy they had come to meet. He was sitting by himself on a bench over to one side. His legs, in white knee-length socks, did not reach the floor, and but for the small rucksack he was holding on his lap I don't think I would have known him, said Austerlitz. As it was, I recognized him by that rucksack of his, and for the first time in as far back as I can remember I recollected myself as a small child, at the moment when I realized that it must have been to this same waiting room I had come on my arrival in England more than half a century ago. As so often, said Austerlitz, I cannot give any precise description of the state of mind this realization induced; I felt something rending within me, and a sense of shame and sorrow, or perhaps something quite different, something inexpressible because we have no words for it, just as I had no words all those years ago when the two strangers came over to me speaking a language I did not understand. All I do know is that when I saw the boy sitting on the bench I became aware, through my dull bemusement, of the destructive effect on me of my desolation through all those past years, and a terrible weariness overcame me at the idea that I had never really been alive, or was only now being born, almost on the eve of my death.

I can only guess what reasons may have induced the minister Elias and his wan wife to take me to live with them in the summer of 1939, said Austerlitz. Childless as they were, perhaps they hoped to reverse the petrifaction of their emotions, which must have been becoming more unbearable to them every day, by devoting themselves together to bringing up a boy then aged four and a half, or perhaps they thought they owed it to a higher authority to perform some good work beyond the level of ordinary charity, a work entailing personal devotion and sacrifice. Or perhaps they thought they ought to save my soul, innocent as it was of the Christian faith. I myself cannot say what my first few days in Bala with the Eliases really felt like. I do remember new clothes that made me very unhappy, and the inexplicable disappearance of my little green rucksack, and recently I have even thought that I could still apprehend the dying away of my native tongue, the faltering and fading sounds that I think lingered on in me at least for a while, like something shut up and scratching or knocking, something that, out of fear, stops its noise and falls silent whenever one tries to listen to it. And certainly the words I had forgotten in a short space of time, and all that went with them, would have remained buried in the depths of my mind had I not, through a series of coincidences, entered the old waiting room in Liverpool Street Station that Sunday morning, a few weeks at the most before it vanished forever in the rebuilding.



*"Maybe I'm never going to find the person I'm supposed to do a real number on."*

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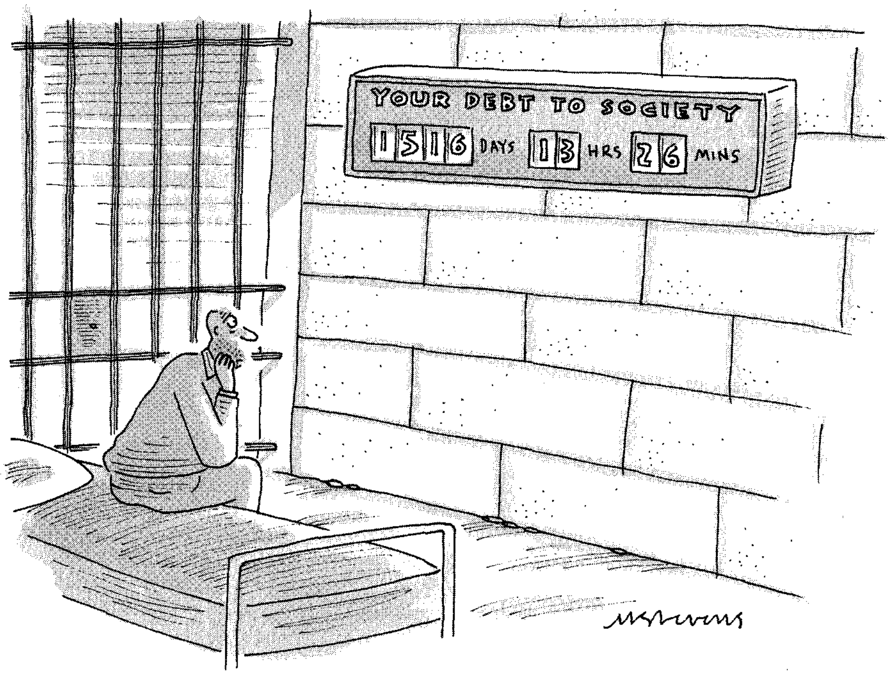
I have no idea how long I stood in the waiting room, said Austerlitz, nor how I got out again and which way I walked back, through Bethnal Green or Stepney, reaching home at last as dark began to fall. Exhausted as I was, I lay down in my drenched clothes and fell into a deep, uneasy sleep from which, as I discovered afterward by making the calculation several times, I did not wake until the middle of the night after the next day. In that sleep, when my body feigned death while feverish thoughts whirled through my head, I was at the innermost heart of a star-shaped fortress, a dungeon entirely cut off from the outside world, and I had to try finding my way into the open, passing down long, low passages that led me through all the buildings I had ever visited and described. It was a nightmarish, never-ending dream, with its main plot interrupted several times by other episodes. One of them gave me a bird's-eye view of a lightless landscape through which a very small railway train was hurrying, twelve earth-colored miniature carriages and a coal-black locomotive under a plume of smoke wafting horizontally backward, with the far end of the plume constantly blown this way and that, like the tip of a large ostrich feather, by the speed of the journey. In another episode, looking out of the window of my train compartment, I saw dark forests of firs, a deeply carved river valley, mountain ranges of cloud on the horizon, and windmills towering above the roofs of the houses clustered around them, with their broad sails cutting rhythmically through the faint light of dawn. In the



middle of these dreams, said Austerlitz, somewhere behind his eyes, he had felt these overwhelmingly immediate images forcing their way out of him, but once he had woken he could recall scarcely any of them even in outline. I realized then, he said, how little practice I had in using my memory, and conversely how hard I must always have tried to recollect as little as possible, avoiding everything that related in any way to my unknown past.

Inconceivable as it seems to me today, I knew nothing about the conquest of Europe by the Germans and the slave state they set up, and nothing about the persecution I had escaped, or at least, what I did know was not much more than a salesgirl in a shop, for instance, knows about the plague or cholera. As far as I was concerned, the world ended in the late nineteenth century. I dared go no further than that, although in fact the whole history of the architecture and civilization of the bourgeois age, the subject of my research, pointed in the direction of the catastrophic events already casting their shadows before them at the time. I did not read newspapers, because, as I now know, I feared unwelcome revelations. I turned on the radio only at certain hours of the day. I was always refining my defensive reactions, creating a kind of quarantine or immune system that, as I maintained my existence in a smaller and smaller space, protected me from anything that could be connected in any way, however distant, with my own early history. Moreover, I had constantly been preoccupied with that accumulation of knowledge which I had pursued for decades, and which served as a substitute or compensatory memory. And if some dangerous piece of information came my way despite all my precautions, as it inevitably did, I was clearly capable of closing my eyes and ears to it, of simply forgetting it like any other unpleasantness. Yet this self-censorship of my mind, the constant suppression of the memories surfacing in me, Austerlitz continued, demanded ever greater efforts and finally, and unavoidably, led to the almost total paralysis of my linguistic faculties, the destruction of all my notes and sketches, my endless nocturnal peregrinations through London, and the hallucinations that plagued me with increasing frequency up to the point of my nervous breakdown in the summer of 1992.

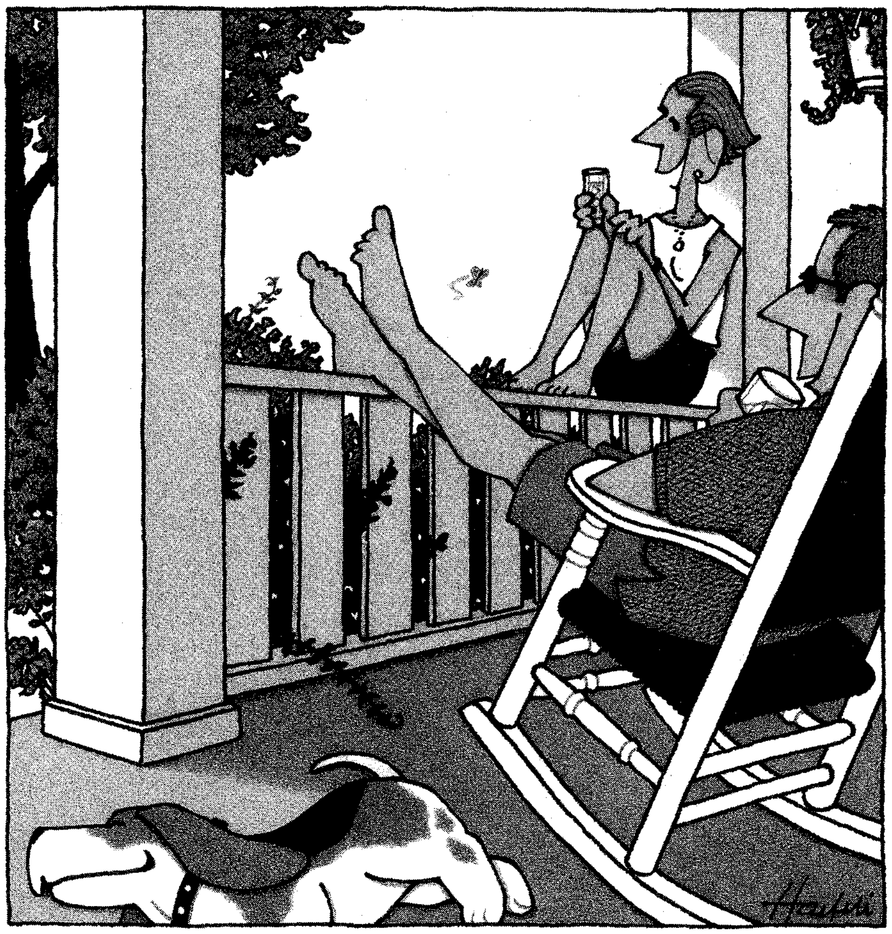
I cannot say exactly how I spent the rest of that year, said Austerlitz; all I know is that the following spring, when there was some improvement in my state of health, on one of my first ventures into the city I visited an antiquarian bookshop near the British Museum where I regularly went in search of architectural engravings. Absent-mindedly, I leafed through the various boxes and drawers, staring sometimes for minutes on end at a star-shaped vault or diamond frieze, a hermitage, a monopteros or a mausoleum, without knowing what I was looking at or why. The owner of the bookshop, Penelope Peacefull, a very beautiful woman whom I had admired for many years, was sitting where she always sat in the mornings, slightly to one side of her desk with its load of books and papers, solving the crossword puzzle on the back of the *Telegraph* with her left hand. She smiled at me from time to time and then looked out at the street again, deep in thought. It was quiet in the shop except for soft voices coming from the little radio that stood beside Penelope, as usual, and these voices, which at first I could hardly make out but which soon became almost too distinct, cast such a spell over me that I entirely forgot the engravings lying before me, and stood there as still as if on no account must I let a single syllable emerging from the rather scratchy radio set escape me.

I was listening to two women talking to each other about the summer of 1939, when they were children and had been sent to England on a special transport. They mentioned a number of cities—Vienna, Munich, Danzig, Bratislava, Berlin—but only when one of the two said that her own transport, after two days travelling through the German Reich and the Netherlands, where she could see the great sails of the windmills from the train, had finally left the Hook of Holland on the ferry Prague to cross the North Sea to Harwich, only then did I know beyond any doubt that these fragments of memory were part of my own life as well. I saw myself waiting on a quay in a long crocodile of children lined up two by two, most of them carrying rucksacks or small leather cases. I saw the great slabs of paving at my feet again, the mica in the stone, the gray-brown water in the harbor basin, the ropes and anchor chains slanting upward, the bows of the ship, higher than a house, the seagulls fluttering over our heads and screeching wildly, the sun breaking through the clouds, and the red-haired girl in the tartan cape and velvet beret who had looked after the smaller children in our compartment during the train journey through the dark countryside. Years later, as I now recalled again, I still had recurrent dreams of this girl playing me a cheerful tune on a kind of bandonion, in a place lit by a bluish night-light.

Are you all right? I heard a voice say suddenly, as if from very far away, and it took me some time to remember where I was and realize that Penelope might have felt concerned about my sudden seizure. I remember telling her that it was nothing, that my thoughts were elsewhere, in the Hook of Holland, as a matter of fact, whereupon Penelope raised her beautiful face slightly with an understanding smile, as if she herself had often been obliged to wait in that cheerless harbor. One way to live cheaply and without tears? she then immediately asked, tapping the tip of her pen on the crossword in her folded newspaper, but just as I was about to confess that I had never been able to solve even the simplest clues in these tortuous English puzzles she said, Oh, it's *rent free!* and scribbled the eight letters swiftly down in the last empty spaces on the grid. When we had parted, I sat for an hour on a bench in Russell Square under the tall plane trees, which were still leafless. It was a sunny day. A number of starlings were marching up and down on the grass, pecking desultorily at the crocuses. I watched them, noticing how the green-gold hues in their dark plumage gleamed, depending which way they turned to catch the light, and came to the conclusion that although I did not know whether I had come to England on the Prague or on some other ferry, the mere mention of the city's name in the present context was enough to convince me that I would have to go there.

Austerlitz concluded his story on that evening in the late winter of 1997, when we sat in the Alderney Road house amid what seemed to me a silence of unfathomable profundity. Quarter or half an hour may have gone by in the light of the blue, evenly flickering flames of the little gas fire before Austerlitz rose and said it would probably be best if I spent the night under his roof. So saying, he went upstairs ahead of me, and led me into a room that, like those on the ground floor, was quite unfurnished except for a kind of camp bed standing unfolded against one wall, with handles at both ends so that it resembled a stretcher. Beside the bed there was a wine crate with a blackened coat of arms burned into it which had once contained Château Gruaud-Larose, and on the crate, in the gentle light of a shaded lamp, stood a glass, a carafe of water, and an old-fashioned radio in a dark-brown Bakelite case. Austerlitz wished me good night and latched the door carefully behind him. I went over to the window, looked down at the empty street below, turned back to the room, sat down on the bed, undid my shoelaces, and thought about Austerlitz, whom I could now hear moving about the room next door. As I lay down, I turned on the radio set standing on the wine crate beside the bed. The names of cities and radio stations with which I used to link the most exotic ideas in my childhood appeared on its round, illuminated dial—Monte Ceneri, Rome, Ljubljana, Stockholm, Beromünster, Hilversum, Prague, and others besides. I turned the volume down very low and listened to a language I did not understand drifting in the air from a great distance: a female voice, which was sometimes lost in the ether, but then emerged again and mingled with the performance of two careful hands moving, in some place unknown to me, over the keyboard of a Bösendorfer or Pleyel and playing certain musical passages, I think from the "Well-Tempered Clavier," which accompanied me far into the realms of slumber. When I woke in the morning, only a faint crackle and hiss was coming from the narrow brass mesh over the loudspeaker. Soon afterward, when I mentioned the mysterious radio at breakfast, Austerlitz told me he had always imagined that the voices moving through the air after the onset of darkness, only a few of which we could catch, had a life of their own, like bats, and shunned the light of day. In the long, sleepless nights of recent years, he said, when I was listening to the women announcers in Budapest, Helsinki, or La Coruña, I often saw them weaving their erratic way far out in the air, and wished I were already in their company. ♦

(*Translated, from the German, by Anthea Bell.*)



*"I hope we have whatever it is we may or may not still be allowed to call Indian summer."*

PROFILES

# THE RUNNER

*He woke up one morning and decided to become someone else.*

BY DAVID SAMUELS

## I—THE LOCKER

On the morning of March 30, 1988, a police detective named Matt Jacobson arrived at the Secure Storage facility in St. George, Utah, with a warrant to search for high-end racing bicycles and tools that had been stolen from a bicycle-maker in California several months before. Raising the corrugated steel door of Locker No. 100, the detective flicked a switch to illuminate a sixty-square-foot space with aluminum walls, no windows, and a bare concrete floor. Inside, he saw bicycle frames, a row of athletic trophies, papers, letters, a sleeping bag, and other personal effects. The detective guessed that the thief had been living in the shed, perhaps for months.

Standing next to Jacobson in the locker, the bicycle-maker, Dave Tesch, stepped forward to identify his stolen goods. A short, stocky, olive-skinned man, he was expert at his craft. The Tesch Bicycle Company, in San Marcos, California, produced approximately five hundred bicycles a year for a growing community of avid cyclists who preferred American-made bikes to those produced by better-known European racing houses like Bottechia and Colnago.

The competitors that worried Tesch most were local. In towns such as San Marcos, the manufacture of high-end racing cycles had grown into a thriving cottage industry, boosted by the surprise gold-medal victory of the American cyclist Alexi Grewal at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. In La Verne, California, a company called Santana made tandem bikes, and had captured more than half of that specialized market. Yet, even in the best of times, manufacturing high-end bicycles was a difficult business. When Tesch opened the door of his shop one morning in October, 1987, to find that someone had kicked over a rooftop turbine vent, jumped down the hole, and made off with more than twenty thousand dollars' worth of frames, parts, and tools, his anger at the theft was compounded by the knowledge that he could ill afford the loss. A similar break-in had been reported at another bicycle firm in the area, Masi, and Tesch leaped with characteristic but misplaced certainty to the conclusion that a rival had burglarized his shop.

In fact, the thief was someone he knew quite well. For the previous few summers, Tesch had worked as an instructor at Jim Davis's Vail Cross-Training Camp, which offered people the chance to enjoy a week in Vail, Colorado, training with athletes like the distance runner Frank Shorter, and the champion triathlete Scott (the Terminator) Molina. The instructors also included a young man named James Hogue, a miler who, according to the camp's promotional literature, had earned a Ph.D. in bioengineering from Stanford University, where he was a professor. With his diffident manner and his youthful face, though, he looked less like a professor than like an undergraduate. His training methods were unorthodox. He drank a mixture of mustard and Perrier during races; he lit a cigarette after crossing the finish line, as the other runners looked on in horror. In the summer of '87, Hogue started showing up in San Marcos, sleeping in his truck, helping Tesch out around the shop, and otherwise leading a life that might have seemed atypical for a Stanford professor.

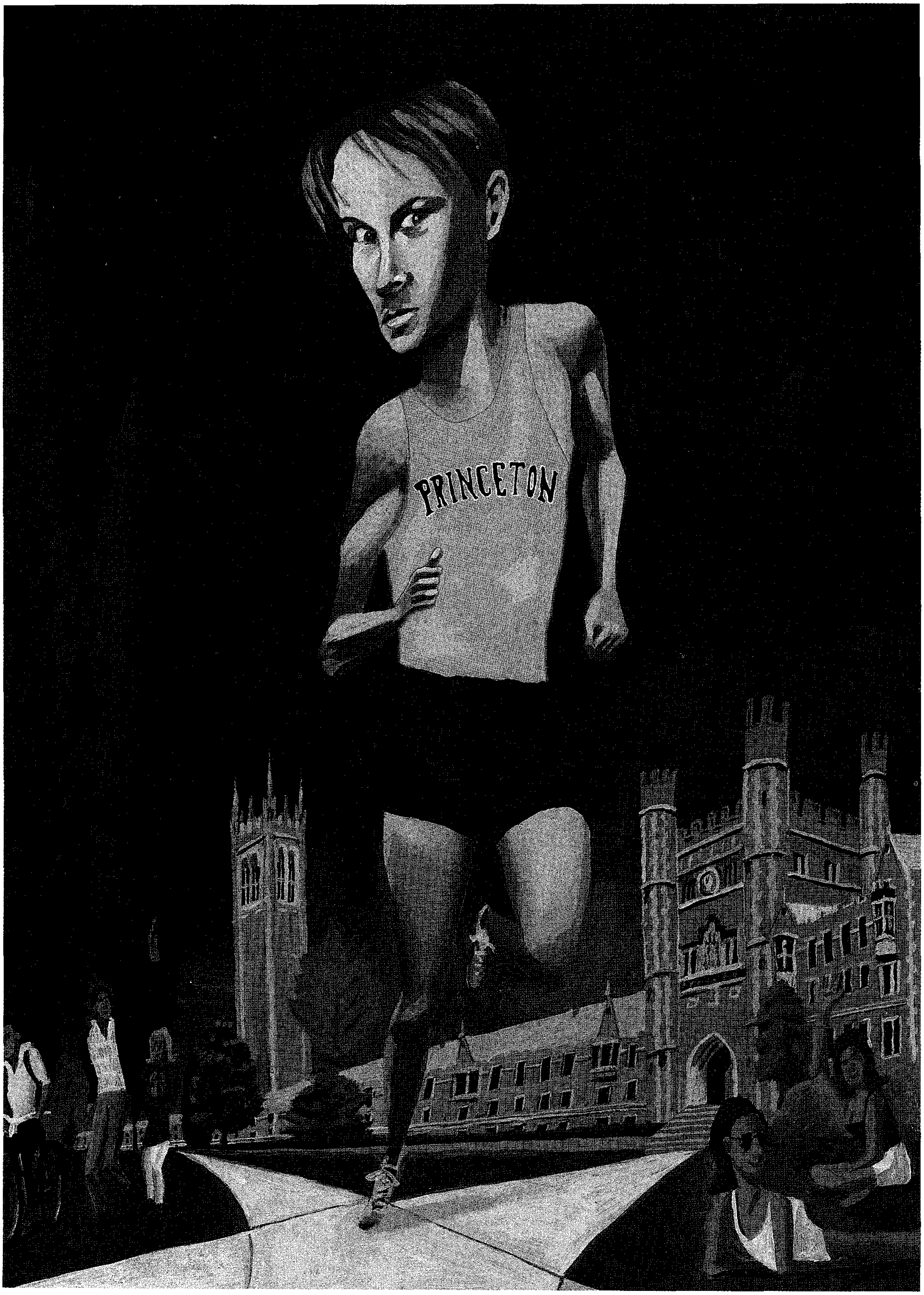
The theft remained unsolved until the following March, when a bicycle enthusiast from Utah named Bruce Stucky stopped by to visit Dave Tesch at his shop. One of his friends had recently been at a party in St. George, Utah, where an acquaintance named Jim Hogue had whipped out a Mitutoyo metric dial caliper engraved with Tesch's name.

What disturbed Matt Jacobson most about the thief's locker was the collection of athletic trophies he found. "They were obviously meant for an eighteen-year-old," the detective recalled. Jacobson, who later specialized in crimes against children, looked at the dates and concluded that Hogue had been entering races under a false name, thus depriving younger runners of the places they had rightfully won. Within minutes of Jacobson's and Tesch's arrival, Hogue appeared. Jacobson placed him in handcuffs and read him his rights. "I remember telling him how appalled I was that someone would do this," the detective said. "And it didn't seem to shake him or faze him at all."

The only hints of Hogue's state of mind survive in the form of two photographs taken at the time of his arrest. A growth of beard obscures his features. Sleeplessness, fear, and nervous exhaustion have settled in the hollows beneath his eyes.

As it turned out, Hogue's theft from the Tesch Bicycle Company was only the beginning of a far more intricate deception, the clues to which were neatly laid out in the locker in St. George. The correspondence there showed that James Hogue had been occupied with a larger, more imaginative goal than disposing of the stolen bikes. He had been dreaming of a better life, to be led by a person who was no longer James Hogue. The product of careful research and planning, this new identity would be backed up by newspaper clippings and trophies that bore the name Alexi Santana—a self-educated Nevada cowboy who could run a mile in just over four minutes and, according to the correspondence found in the shed, had applied for admission to some of America's finest

MARK ULRIKSEN



*How did a twenty-nine-year-old drifter, petty thief, and ex-con turn himself into a nineteen-year-old freshman at Princeton?*

universities, including Stanford, Princeton, and Brown.

"It was a weird, unbelievable story," Tesch recalled. "Like 'I was born a poor black child,' the old Steve Martin routine." The name Alexi Santana also rang a bell: a combination of the first name of Alexi Grewal, the cycling gold medallist, and the surname Santana, the tandem-bike manufacturer.

With Hogue in custody, Detective Jacobson called Stanford to inform the university that Alexi Santana was actually a twenty-eight-year-old drifter named James Hogue, who was on his way to jail in Utah. Hogue pleaded guilty to the theft and was given a sentence of one to five years in prison. A story appeared in the April 17, 1988, San Jose *Mercury News*, which noted that police had also "found evidence that Hogue, using the name 'Alexi Santana,' was corresponding with Ivy League universities about athletic scholarships." Years later, Detective Jacobson simply did not remember whether he had called all the universities on Hogue's list or not.

## II—THE LOTTERY

Alexi Santana's application to Princeton was one of nearly fourteen thousand for twelve hundred places in the Class of 1992. Once, when Fred Hargadon, the head of the Princeton admissions office, was asked to describe the perfect candidate for admission, he answered with the name of a fictional character, Huck Finn. Most students selected for admission probably have less in common with the illiterate son of a violent alcoholic than with his diplomatic young friend Tom Sawyer. Still, Hargadon's answer does neatly summarize the virtues that Princeton looks for in at least some of its applicants—originality, self-reliance, and the kind of "diverse life experiences" that might keep the school's Tom Sawyers entertained. Santana's score of 1410 on the S.A.T.s was well above the average of students admitted to Princeton, and his Hispanic-sounding surname likely recommended him for special consideration as a minority applicant. But his personal essay, the story of a self-educated ranch hand who read Plato under the stars, was what lifted his application to the top of the pile. Santana, the admissions office reported, had "trained on his own in the Mojave desert, where he herds cattle for a living (mostly in a canyon called 'Little Purgatory'). On a visit to campus in March, he slept indoors for the first time in ten years."

THE SURRENDERED MOM
You need five hundred dollars for a beanbag chair? Sounds like a plan!
Drive you and six friends to the mall? Why, I'd *love* to!
You're quitting middle school? Well, you know best!

As his application was being read, Hogue was living in the storage locker in St. George, and spending long afternoons in the public library, researching the published statistics that tell who is admitted to universities like Princeton and why. The great majority of every Princeton class, Hogue discovered, was made up of the children of parents whom most Americans would describe as "rich." About a fifth of every Princeton class consisted of students whose fathers or mothers went to Princeton; these "legacies" had S.A.T. scores that were often well below the average for their class. Applicants from sparsely populated states like Nevada, Montana, and Wyoming, he found, received preference over students from competitive high schools in cities like New York. This system dated to the end of the First World War, a time when officials at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale were working hard to find an answer to what they called the "Jewish question." They arrived at a formula for "geographical distribution" (now styled "geographical diversity") that would increase the number of "white" students on their campuses while radically decreasing the numbers of Jews. The rules of the game were not exactly those described in the admissions brochures. Still, it was a game that Hogue thought he might win.

The tales that Hogue told Princeton explained his lack of a high-school transcript and teacher recommendations; they also flattered Princeton's self-image as a cradle of meritocracy. By accepting applicants like Santana, the university reminded skeptics that a

Princeton degree was a reflection of personal achievement, not just a means by which wealthy, successful Americans might pass on their advantages to their children.

Even a cursory look at the numbers, Hogue believed, revealed that Princeton's sense of itself as a home for the finest young scholars, regardless of family background, was no less a fiction than his story of the ranch hand who read Plato under the stars. The America of the late eighties was a nation in which élite credentials were more closely tied to social and economic status than ever before. A Princeton degree was a first-class ticket to the world of investment banks, venture-capital firms, management consultancies, and high-tech companies, and to graduate programs in business, medicine, and law. These lessons were hardly lost on the lonely drifter, whose ability as a runner was matched by his talent for telling stories that might take him where he wanted to go.

## III—THE LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER

The story of the young Huck Finn from Nevada with high S.A.T. scores and a Hispanic surname had a particular appeal for Princeton's track coach, Larry Ellis. Ellis was already impressed by the press clippings he had read, which showed the eighteen-year-old ranch hand beating his track competition with times as fast as or faster than those run by Princeton's older, more experienced athletes. In fact, when Ellis first heard the story of the young man who had taught himself to run in the desert he was so impressed that he shared it with his wife. "Larry was so surprised about an athlete who was able to roam throughout the country, practically educating himself," his widow, Shirley Ellis, recalled. Ellis died in 1998. "The boy's mother supposedly was in Europe; she was an artist. His father had died. He lived on an Indian reservation and was a very active person."

Ellis, the first black man to assume a head-coaching job at an Ivy League university, did not mind that Santana's background might strike many people at Princeton as unusual. He urged Santana to visit Princeton, and sent him a round-trip ticket. When the assistant track coach, Fred Samara, heard that the runner was coming to visit, he took a member of the team, Jon Luff, aside. "Santana's coming out here," Luff remembers him saying, "and I want you to run as hard as you possibly can, every day, the entire time he's here. And I want you to come back Monday and report to me, and tell me exactly what you think." (Samara denies asking Luff to do this.)

Luff, a handsome, dark-haired, and poised young man, was from Colorado; the coaches reasoned that, as a fellow-Westerner, he would be able to relate to Santana and show him around. "He always wore a hat, probably to hide the fact that he was going bald," Luff recalled of his first meeting with Santana, late that winter. "And he was just kind of shy, and kept his eyes on the ground. He was short and only weighed a hundred and twenty pounds, and so believing that he was eighteen or nineteen years old was not that hard. He had a real slight build and a real soft handshake. He seemed just like a young guy who was coming out to look at colleges."

Dressed in jeans, a white T-shirt, a windbreaker, and cowboy boots or running shoes, depending on the time of day, the young prospect made a good impression. He could run. "He could have run thirty minutes for ten thousand metres," Luff said. "He probably could have run fourteen minutes and fifteen seconds for five thousand, if he wanted to." Luff, one of the better runners on the Princeton team, tried to beat Santana. "I couldn't crop him, couldn't really even tire him out, " he recalled. "And so, of course, I came back and said, 'The guy's for real.' "

Distance running offers almost no material rewards and demands a dedication so intense that competitive runners can find it difficult to hold down regular jobs. It is not unusual for distance runners to cry, scream, or vomit during a race. The habit of pushing through physical barriers can lead to swollen knees and snapped tendons, and to chronic injuries that make it hard to walk, let alone run. What the activity offers in exchange is the euphoric pleasure of the runner's high. "One of the things I used to like to do was run in the dark," Jon Luff recalls. "And you can go out and run really hard in the dark and you actually don't feel like you have a body. You feel like you're just this head moving around. You're just kind of out there, floating. It's like this distilled transcendence."

The world of long-distance runners is filled with people who dedicate their lives to the experience that Luff describes, spending two months here and three months there, moving from one runner's town to the next, without steady work or sustaining relationships. The runner's mind, operating in a void for many hours every day, becomes more and more practiced in reducing things to their essence, and in enduring great extremes of pain.

Santana was different from the person Luff had expected to meet. He was gentle and inquisitive. As he discovered things about Luff, he offered stories that expanded the territory they had in common. Luff looked forward to seeing his new friend in September.

Several weeks later, Alexi Santana received, via a post-office box in St. George, a letter informing him that he had been admitted to Princeton. The timing was inconvenient. In the spring of 1988, when 1,134 other members of the Princeton Class of 1992 were looking forward to their last summer before college, James Hogue was being sentenced in Utah; he would serve twelve months of his one-to-five-year term. No one in the admissions office ever saw the article in the San Jose *Mercury News* mentioning that a thief had been applying to Ivy League colleges under the pseudonym of Alexi Santana. Instead, Larry Ellis learned that the track team's star recruit would be caring for his mother, the sculptor Susan Indris-Santana, who was dying of cancer in Switzerland. He would be forced to defer his admission to Princeton for at least one year.

Hogue arrived at Princeton in August of 1989, six weeks before classes began, to work out on the track and to attend an early orientation program. There he was interviewed by Harvey Yavener, a reporter for the Trenton *Times*. Coach Ellis had told Yavener about the barefoot runner from a ranch in Nevada, and he thought that it would make an excellent feature for his paper. The interview took place early in August, a month when reporters on the college-sports beat are always grateful for a good story.

Dressed in running sneakers, jeans, and a white oxford shirt, the young Princeton freshman seemed confident but shy. His eyes were hidden by a pair of dark sunglasses. He had the weather-beaten features of a person who had led a hard life, who had slept out-of-doors and worked as a cowboy. He had lived in Switzerland, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Morocco, and several Western states, he said. He had been educated at home.

"It's not that unusual," he told Yavener, before providing the most complete recorded version of the facts of Alexi Santana's life. "At least, not when I was young in California. I went to nursery school and kindergarten, and then my parents decided they'd teach me at home. You have to set up a private school. I learned to read early and always had a lot of books. Some days, I'd read from morning to night. I learned some French and Italian. I never have had a TV, but I listened to a lot of music. I'd go to librarians, and they'd help me find the books I needed."

Yavener had been covering college sports in southern New Jersey for nearly forty years. He had never heard a story like this one before. The Princeton freshman had started running only two years earlier, while working as a wrangler on a thousand-square-mile ranch in Arizona. There he spent "weeks with just his books, his horse, the cows, and a radio for company."

"I just started to run around the canyons in a pair of old tennis shoes, nothing fanatical," Santana explained. "I think I might have the talent to become a winning runner in college. But those stories about my coming in with impressive times, they're just hearsay."

Santana's father was dead and his mother was ill, he said. He had no fixed address. But, as he told the reporter that afternoon in August, he had finally found a home. "If anyone asks," he said, "I'll tell them I'm from Princeton."

When Yavener's story appeared in the Trenton *Times*, the next morning, the transformation appeared to be complete. James Hogue, petty thief, was now Alexi Santana, a self-educated ranch hand, a gifted runner, and easily the most interesting member of the Princeton Class of 1993.

## IV—THE ROOMMATES

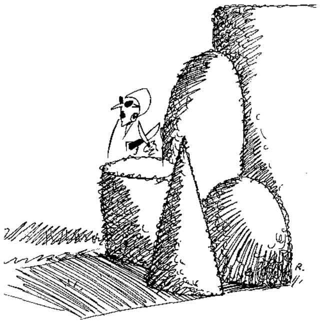
Like most incoming freshmen, Ben Richardson arrived on campus that September with new clothes, a computer, and a selection of his favorite books and records. He also brought the packet of material that Princeton had sent with his acceptance letter, including a little card that gave the names and addresses of his roommates. Over the summer, Richardson had talked with Avshalom Yotam, of Palo Alto, California, and Austin Nahm, of Chappaqua, New York. His third roommate, Alexi Santana, did not have a phone number or address listed on the card.

Richardson's new room was in a suite on the ground floor of Holder Hall, a Gothic stone pile constructed around a pleasant grassy courtyard. Arriving on campus a week before most of his classmates, Richardson saw a light in one of the windows of his suite. The next morning, he met Alexi Santana, who was just returning from a run. Santana told him that he ran ten miles a day. His father had been killed in a car crash, and his mother had recently died of leukemia.

In the course of the year, it was hard not to look for clues that might further illuminate his roommate's story. Santana's room was neat and filled with books and CDs, and the Mexican wool blanket on his bed was always tucked in flat. There were no pictures of his friends or his family. "I remember asking, 'Alexi, your bed's always made up very neatly. Do you get up and make it every day, or what?' "Richardson recalled.

"No," Santana told him. "I sleep on the floor."

Hanging on the wall beside his bed was a picture of a skier kicking out his legs and raising a curtain of powdered white snow. Richardson was curious about the picture, too. "How did you get someone to take a photo like that?" Richardson asked.



"Oh, I was doing some stuff, doing some stunts," Santana said.

"What were you doing stunts for?"

"A movie."

Santana's habit of avoiding eye contact when he spoke tended to discourage further conversation. Still, the stories Richardson heard would always come around again, embroidered with further details either from Santana or from the active imaginations of other freshmen, who were soon engaged in a class-wide game of telephone. Santana had skied in the Olympics; he had dropped from a helicopter and turned double back flips in a Peter Markle ski movie called "Hot Dog."

Richardson did know that his quiet roommate was an exceptionally gifted student, who had cracked the curve on a chemistry exam that was notorious for giving students fits.

"Those tests are written for babies," Santana told him. "Princeton babies their students. It's incredibly easy."

Richardson found Santana's attitude a bit arrogant, an impression that was reinforced by the reason he gave for being at Princeton. "I'm here to find a wife," Santana said.

Was he? It was hard for his roommates to say. Santana did not invite them to parties he hosted in his room, where he served wine and cheese to a select group of freshmen women, and told stories about his adventures. With his mature demeanor and sophisticated tastes, he soon earned the nickname Sexy Alexi.

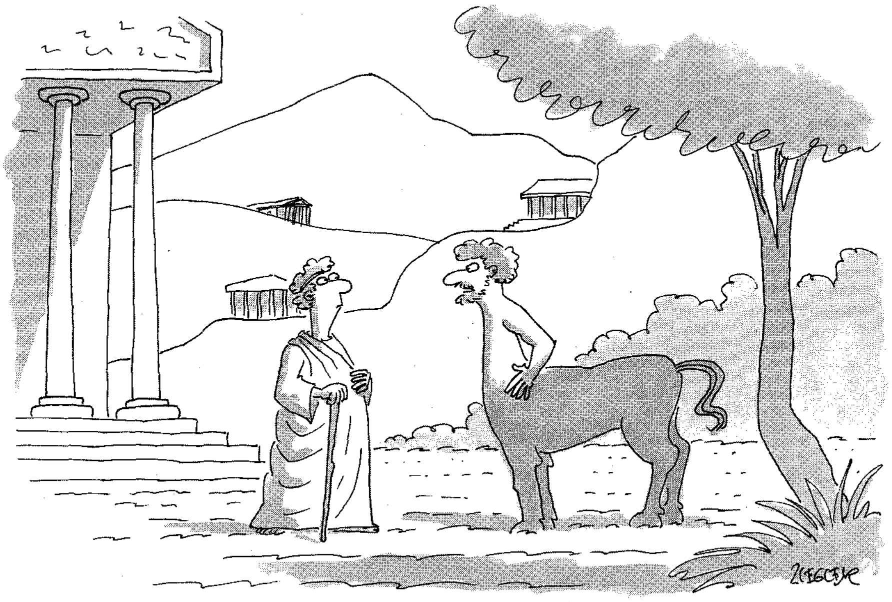
"He was in very good physical shape," Avshalom Yotam recalled. "But he always walked hunched over, with his long hair sort of hiding his face. So you never really saw his face, even when he was right there in front of you. I don't think Alexi made direct eye contact with me or Ben very often. And he was always walking fast, like it was a race." In fact, communication between the two roommates was so slight that Yotam later remembered only a single conversation. "I remember pretty distinctly lying on the couch in the common room, and at some point either he asked me or it somehow came up, and I told him that I was from Palo Alto," Yotam recounted.

"You know, Palo Alto is a really nice place," Santana remarked.

"Oh, have you been there?"

"Yes, I've been there," he answered. "It's a really nice place."

Yotam tried to get his roommate to expand on his impressions. Santana didn't want to talk. He was a private person, he said. Most Princeton freshmen share a tiny bedroom with a roommate, and privacy is often elusive. But Santana was able to realize his desire for privacy, thanks to a freak accident involving the fourth roommate, Austin Nahm. After Nahm arrived at Princeton, he left campus on a freshman orientation trip, was hit by a speeding truck, and died. When Santana heard the news, he cried, though he showed no inclination to speak to the reporters and counsellors who soon arrived at their room, or to otherwise share his emotions. But, as he went to classes and made new friends, alert to the possibility that at any moment his mask might slip, Alexi Santana had a room at Princeton all to himself.



*"Being a hybrid, I get to have my way with a variety of species, and at the same time I enjoy a healthy tax credit."*

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## V—ALEXI SANTANA

Looking back years later, members of the Princeton Class of 1993 understood the story of Alexi Santana as a puzzling crime, as an abuse of the admissions process, or as a weird occurrence that had little to do with their own lives. Some expressed compassion for their former classmate. All remembered that they had been fooled.

Christine Zandliviet works for the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina. She first met Santana at a freshman-orientation program. "He mentioned something about Interlochen, and something about Basel," she recalled. "But he was never specific, as though he didn't want to be pinned down into where his mother was physically, in which sanatorium, or where he had travelled in Switzerland." Zandliviet had been living in Geneva. She found it strange that Santana didn't seem to know elementary words in German or French.

Orin Kerr is a law professor at George Washington University, specializing in criminal law and computer crime. He remembered watching from the bay window of his room in Holder Hall as Santana was tapped for the Ivy Club, the oldest and most illustrious of Princeton's élite eating clubs. "Two guys came and, I guess, tapped him," Kerr recounted. "And they rushed him out into the courtyard, and poured champagne over his head. And he was obviously very excited. And I remember being struck that it was kind of a funny thing, because he really didn't fit the stereotype of someone who would be in Ivy."

Brian Sax works for a network marketing company in California. He was friends with Santana on the track team, where they were the only two runners with long hair. "He would deflect any conversation about his past by either asking another question or by saying something totally random," he remembered. "You'd be having a conversation, and the conversation would be going that way, and all of a sudden you'd be talking about something different. We'd be talking about track, and if the conversation perhaps didn't go the way he wanted it to go, then all of a sudden you'd be talking about Madagascar."

Barbie Freidin lives in Princeton. She speaks in a soft, high voice that seems perfectly pitched for telling bedtime stories. Her husband, Bob Freidin, a professor of linguistics at Princeton, was Alexi Santana's faculty adviser. Barbie thought the young man was a delightful person with a wide-ranging curiosity, who sometimes seemed uncomfortable talking about his past. He was also a very good "resource" for her twelve-year-old son, Bernie, who liked exploring storm drains, and who liked hearing stories about life on a ranch. Santana sometimes ate dinner with the Freidins. On one particularly hot afternoon, she remembered, Santana climbed up on the roof and sprayed it with water to bring the temperature down inside the house. When Barbie Freidin walked outside, she was surprised to see waves of mist rising off her roof, obscuring the figure of the quiet young man.

## VI—THE RECOGNITION

On February 16, 1991, a senior at Yale named Renee Pacheco attended the Harvard-Yale-Princeton track meet in New Haven, to watch a friend run, and she noticed that one of the members of the Princeton team looked familiar. Their eyes met, and she recognized Jay Mitchell Huntsman, a mysterious stranger who had arrived at Palo Alto High School in September, 1985.

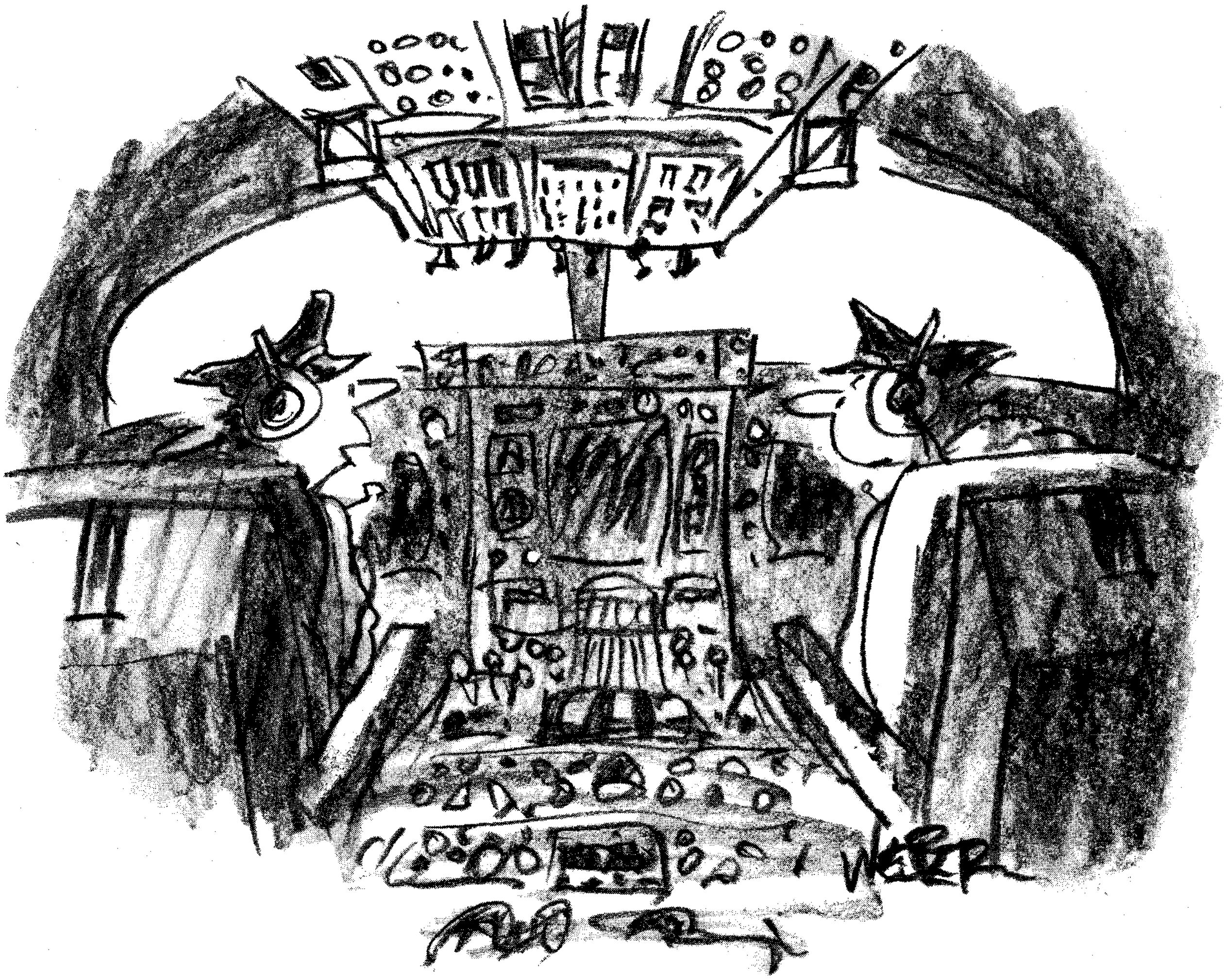
Jay Huntsman, or Riivk, as he called himself, was a talented runner who had arrived at her school with an incredible story. He was born in San Diego in 1969, and had moved at the age of eight to Ananda Ashram, a Nevada commune where he lived with his parents, Craig and Rosemary Huntsman, and his sister, Solange. He had educated himself. During the breaks in his work, he ran between fifty and sixty miles a week, and after his parents died, in an accident in Bolivia, he had decided to attend Palo Alto High School to complete his education before applying to Stanford. He found a room in town. He made friends at school. Parents liked him. On October 7, 1985, a few weeks after Huntsman appeared in Palo Alto, he entered the Stanford Invitational Meet. Blowing past the rest of the field, he'd won the cross-country race, but he never reported to the officials' table. He had trained in the wide-open spaces of Nevada, he told a reporter for the *Mercury News*. "I'm just a normal kid," he added. "I just want to fit in."

Some of the reporters who watched the race found it troubling that the "mystery runner" (as the papers soon dubbed him) had failed to claim his victory. Acting on a hunch, Jason Cole, a reporter with a Palo Alto newspaper, the *Peninsula Times Tribune*, called the municipal office in charge of public records for the city of San Diego and asked if there was a birth certificate on file for a Jay Mitchell Huntsman. There was. Born to Craig and Rosemary Huntsman, of 3145 Rosecranz Place, in San Diego, on January 19, 1969, Jay Mitchell Huntsman had died two days afterward of pneumonia. Cole told the school authorities about his discovery and reported it in the *Times Tribune*. After initial demurrals, the student acknowledged that his real name was James Hogue. He soon left town.

"I saw him running," Pacheco told Jason Cole, almost six years later, after first calling her high-school track coach in Palo Alto. "I walked right up to him—I'm surprised he didn't recognize me. I just wanted to scream."

Cole told Princeton that the sophomore Alexi Santana was actually James Hogue, an ex-convict from Utah who had engaged in similar deceptions before. "We know you don't know this about your undergraduate, but he's a phony," Cole remembers saying. "You guys might want to be thinking about how you want to deal with this, because I can pretty much predict that this is going to be a big story."

Justin Harmon, the director of communications at Princeton, was grateful for the warning. A meeting was immediately convened with the dean of admissions, Fred Hargadon, and the dean of the college. Santana's file was produced. His application was reviewed. Taking six or seven courses a semester, it was later reported, Santana had received a grade of A in nearly every class. "It became clear to us," Harmon recalled, "particularly to the deans, that the only course of action, from the standpoint of the institution, since this young man had applied to Princeton under utterly



*"Here's the deal. I'll fly the plane, and you make the excuses."*

false pretenses, was to declare the admission null and void. And so that's what we did." Alexi Santana was now, officially, a ghost.

The problem of James Hogue's physical presence on the Princeton campus took less than twenty-four hours to solve. On Tuesday, February 26th, two men in suits arrived at the door of the laboratory classroom where Professor John Suppe was teaching Geology 316, a class that dealt with large-scale structural phenomena, such as faulting and folding, that are associated with violent ruptures in the surface of the earth. "All of a sudden, they started reading him his rights, and they put him in cuffs right there," a classmate recalled.

As news of the arrest spread around campus, the track team gathered at one of the eating clubs; the atmosphere reminded Brian Sax of the silence that follows an upset in sports. Luff spoke on the phone with Jason Cole. Santana wasn't twenty years old, he learned. He was thirty-one. He had served time in prison. "Here was a person who was a good friend of a lot of people in the room, and all of a sudden he's someone totally different," Sax recalled. "People were saying, 'Huh? What did this guy do? Did he commit murder? Did he do something really bad? Who is this guy?' "

Hogue was being held at the Princeton Borough Police Station, on Nassau Street, just outside the university gates. He was interviewed there by a Detective Reading, who remembered that Hogue appeared sad but composed, and that he readily answered the questions he was asked:

> Q: Under what name did you make application to Princeton University?
> A: Under Alexi Santana.
> Q: Where did you obtain that name?
> A: I made that up.
> Q: For what purpose?
> A: I wanted to start all over again, without any burdens of my past.

In the course of the interview, Detective Reading asked James Hogue exactly a hundred and fifty questions. Under terrible pressure, and facing the collapse of what was both a saving act of self-invention and his greatest con yet, Hogue answered every one of the detective's questions with a polite and deadpan calm, without telling lies but in no way revealing anything of much interest about himself or his past. Perhaps the answer to the mystery of Alexi Santana was too personal to reveal to a police officer. Perhaps the mystery was all Hogue had left.

## VII—THE FALL

Hogue's story soon caught the attention of the national media, but he refused to speak to reporters. Charged with theft by deception and three counts of forgery, and unable to make bail, he was transferred to the Mercer County Correctional Center to await trial. There he received visits from, among others, Bob Freidin and Giacinto Scoles, a gentle man who had been educated in Italy, and who taught physical chemistry at Princeton.

Scoles saw Hogue as a con man, but one who had a strong sense of intellectual curiosity. Seeing him in prison was a shock. Scoles was bothered by having to get permission in advance, stand in front of the prison gates as they slowly opened, talk to his former student through a thick sheet of Plexiglas. Hogue wasn't a person who belonged in prison, Scoles concluded. He was a person who needed friendship and psychological help. A friend and colleague at Princeton warned Scoles that cases like Hogue's could not be solved by well-meaning intervention. Past a certain age, the colleague said, people never change—they won't, or they can't.

Scoles disagreed. Hogue, he believed, had simply been careless about the consequences of his actions. When he finally made bail and was released from custody, Scoles offered him money, which he refused. Scoles also helped him relocate to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Hogue took classes at the Harvard Extension School, and was hired part time to catalogue the university's collection of precious minerals and gems. Sadly, the experiment did not end as Scoles might have hoped. More than fifty thousand dollars' worth of minerals and gems, along with an expensive microscope belonging to the university and a chair with the Harvard seal, were discovered in Hogue's room; Princeton could briefly enjoy a laugh at Harvard's expense.

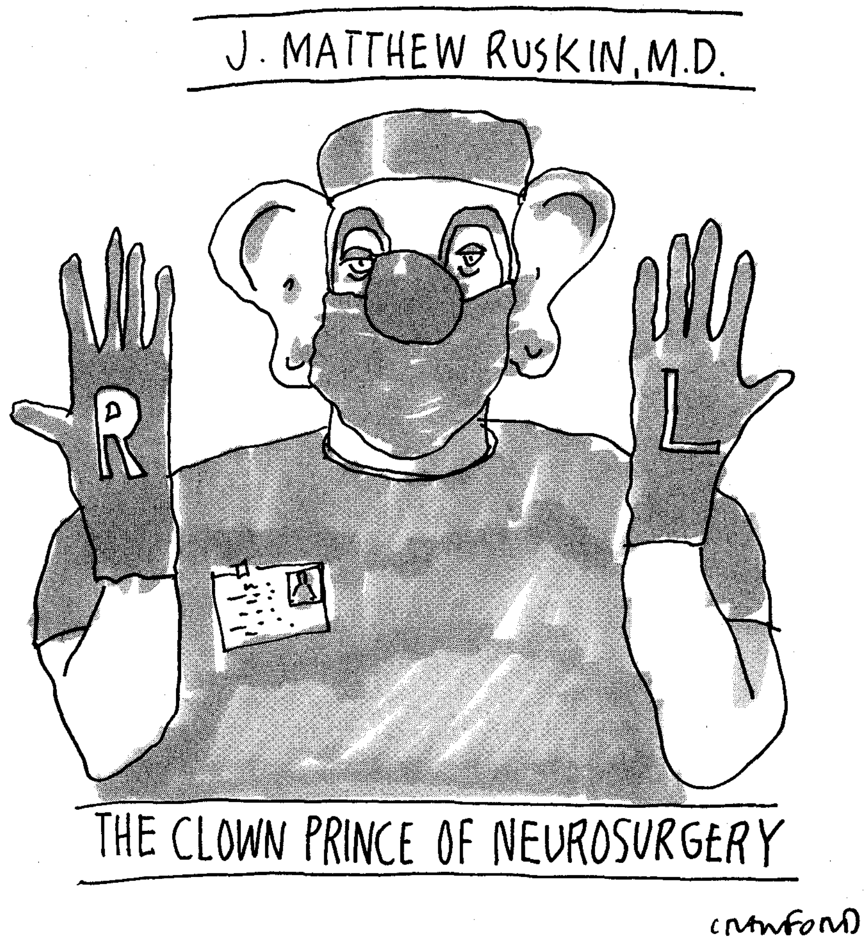
Hogue's attorney, Robert Obler, had hoped to play the class card, and somehow put Princeton University on trial; perhaps the jury would sympathize with a young runner from humble origins who had tried to better himself by seeking an education. Instead, on February 10, 1992, almost a year after Hogue was exposed, he appeared before Judge Paulette Sapp-Peterson at the Mercer County Courthouse and pleaded guilty to the charge of theft by deception.

"I submitted an application at Princeton University which had a different name and date of birth," he said as he stood before the court in his prison blues. "It was my intent to gain admission by deception."

He was sentenced to two hundred and seventy days at the Mercer County Correctional Center, a hundred hours of community service, and five years' probation; he was also ordered to make restitution to Princeton of $21,124 upon his release.

News of the sentence merited a mention in the *Times*, but the case was soon obscured by a flood of stories showing that Alexi Santana was hardly unique. Lon Grammer, a senior at Yale who had supposedly had a colorful career as a minor-league baseball player, was unmasked as a former C student from Cuesta Community College, in California. At Duke, Maurice de Rothschild, who had thrown lavish parties for the swim team and purchased bouquets of *Gloriosa rothschildiana*, the Rothschild lily, from the Campus Florist, in Durham, was revealed to be Mauro Cortez, Jr., the thirty-seven-year-old son of poor immigrant parents in El Paso. Harvard officials were dismayed to learn that Gina Grant had omitted from her application any reference to the fact that she had bludgeoned her mother to death with a lead-crystal candlestick. Nor was the act of imposture confined to Ivy League campuses. Throughout the decade, a parade of well-known Americans, from dot-com entrepreneurs to the manager of the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team, would admit that they had fabricated some portion of their biographies. If lying and being lied to are universal experiences, it is still tempting to see the preoccupation with these stories as a peculiarly American trait. Self-invention is the founding subject of American literature. We celebrate the self-made man, and honor the dream of transcending one's origins; we are suckers for people who invent themselves from scratch.

James Hogue returned from Cam-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THE CLOWN PRINCE OF NEUROSURGERY

bridge to New Jersey for his sentencing on December 18, 1992, and served five months. The same day that he was released, he was arrested in Cambridge for the theft of the gems, and ended up serving an additional seventeen months, for theft and probation violation. And then, once more, he disappeared.

## VIII—THE BICYCLE THIEF

On the evening of July 15, 1997, Officer Jeff Harmon, of the Aspen Police Department, took a report about the theft of a bicycle. Officer Harmon remembered seeing a bicycle of that description the night before, locked to a tree by the Hyman Avenue mall. The next evening, Harmon and his partner, Vicki Nall, found the stolen bicycle, locked to a tree in the same area; James Hogue was working the lock.

"Police! You're under arrest!" Nall shouted. Hogue shoved her backward, turned around, and ran into Harmon. Nall handcuffed him and took him to the Pitkin County jail. His arrest and subsequent conviction, on a second charge of bicycle theft, became part of the Pitkin County records and eventually led me to his address.

After months of research into the facts of his life, I thought I knew James Hogue. He was born in Wyandotte County, Kansas, in 1959, and I had visited the house where he grew up—a small, single-story ranch house in a working-class neighborhood of Kansas City, Kansas. I had spoken to classmates of his from high school in Wyandotte County and from his college years, which were spent in Laramie and Austin. I was particularly interested in the relationship between Hogue and the character he had created. Santana, it seemed to me, had balanced out the parts of Hogue that were unstable and weak and most in need of protection. Now that protection was gone. He moved from rented room to rented room in the mountain resort towns of Colorado, a thirty-seven-year-old drifter. He spent some time in Telluride, where he did construction work. I mailed a package to a post-office box in Aspen containing a videotape and a letter that expressed my desire to learn more about his life. When he didn't answer, I went to find him. He left Aspen shortly before I arrived.

The videotape I had sent James Hogue, made by the documentary filmmaker Jesse Moss, contained brief segments of interviews I had conducted. Among the segments on the tape was a long conversation I had with Keith Mark, a labor lawyer from Kansas City who closely resembles his boyhood hero, Pete Rose. Like Hogue, Mark grew up in Wyandotte County, ran track at Washington High School, and had a father who worked for the railroad. Hogue had been his closest friend. When Hogue went to McDonald's, Mark remembered, he always ordered a Big Mac without the burger. He slept on the floor in a sleeping bag and read running magazines. He ran with bells on his feet so that he would be more aware of the rhythm of his stride. Running, Mark explained, was a ticket out. It was a chance to follow in the footsteps of famous Kansas milers like Glenn Cunningham and Jim Ryun, and to win an athletic scholarship to college. When Hogue won a race, he would go out to his father's car and change his clothes. When the announcer called his name after the race, he would step up to the podium to accept his medal, neatly attired in slacks and a dress shirt.

Hogue's father, Eugene, who died in 1997, was a fixture at the races. He stood by himself and rooted for the Washington High School runners to win. Hogue's parents were quiet and not particularly demonstrative. Mark used to see them together, an older couple walking around the neighborhood.

Before I left his office in Kansas City, Keith Mark gave me a packet of letters he had received from his friend during Hogue's first year at the University of Wyoming, which he entered in the fall of 1977. Their author's sense of determination is evident in nearly every line of the detailed instructions that he mailed to Mark, back home in Kansas:

> The higher up that you start, the safer your position will be. The first impressions you give the other runners could be very important in whether you make the team or

> not. Let them know very little about yourself. . . . You should wear either a plain T-shirt or perhaps that Wyoming shirt, but remember that the less they know about you, the better.

These letters may reflect the particular circumstances in which Hogue found himself as a freshman in Laramie. The coach of the men's track team, Ron Richardson, had arrived in Laramie that fall, with the dream of turning Wyoming into a running powerhouse that would rival the University of Texas at El Paso and the legendary University of Oregon program, which produced Steve Prefontaine. Members of the Wyoming team that year describe Richardson as a cold, distant figure who met with his athletes underneath the bleachers of the university's indoor track in a small, cramped office, where he kept a dog-eared copy of a book about the management techniques of Genghis Khan. As the skies grew dark, and temperatures dropped, Richardson would push his runners through thirty-two two-hundred-and-twenty-metre sprints, followed by sixteen quarter miles and eight half-mile runs. Having read that sprinters would retain muscle memory when they ran faster than they were ordinarily able to, he also developed a unique system for training his distance runners. He would tie a rope to a tumbling belt around the runner's waist, and tow the runner up and down the high-altitude trails, holding the other end of the rope as he drove his Volkswagen Bug. When his runners lost a meet at Brigham Young University, he picked them up early the next morning, dropped them off seventeen miles from Laramie, and told them to run home.

The true stars of Richardson's recruiting class did not arrive on campus until after the start of school: a collection of world-class runners from Kenya, including the future Olympian Joseph Nzau. Most were in their mid-twenties, the age at which distance runners reach the peak of their mental and physical development. Older and stronger, the Kenyans quickly established their dominance over the American athletes, who were just out of high school.

More than two decades later, the American runners at the University of Wyoming still remembered the experience of being thrown into annihilating daily competition with the runners from Kenya. "People were struggling in their own way with the acclimation to a college program with a very demanding coach in a peer group that was very challenging, even at this level of high-calibre American athletes," Mike Penney, then a freshman who had recently arrived from Colorado, recalled. "All of a sudden, there's these foreign athletes, who are so far beyond where we were at that time." Richardson's strategy paid off on the track. In November of 1977, the University of Wyoming's cross-country team finished third in the country, behind Oregon and El Paso.

That fall and the following spring, Penney spent a lot of time with James Hogue, the only one of the American runners who refused to concede superiority to the Kenyans. Hogue pushed himself to the limits of his physical endurance and beyond. He copied Joseph Nzau's training methods, which included running in snowy weather on the freeways outside Laramie while wearing heavy construction boots. Soon, Hogue's body began to break down under the stress. After he was injured, he ran on the indoor track. He ran in the swimming pool. He searched the running literature for other methods that might help improve his times.

"The symptoms of the beginning of staleness are the opposite of the symptoms of successful sharpening; the runner no longer wishes to race," he wrote to Keith Mark that spring. "His resistance to colds and other infections is lower, and he likely is suffering from tendon and muscle soreness. Finally, there is a pronounced decline in will."

The uneven results of Hogue's regimen are apparent in a letter he sent to Mark at the end of the school year:

> I got your letter just before my last test. I've studied 37 hours for this one. These past two weeks have been really exhausting. . . .
>
> Indoors. Air Force anchor mile relay 51.6 2nd
>
> Colo State 1000 1st 2:18.4 2m relay 1:58.9 2nd
>
> Colorado 300 way back 32.71 Mile 2nd 4:16.38. . . .
>
> Outdoors. Colo State 800m 8th 1:52.84 57.0. . . .
>
> Oregon 800m 2nd 1:51.61 50.3
>
> I actually don't remember the last 220 and was unconscious for ten minutes afterwards. . . . I could have run the 1500 and 800 at WAC, but I didn't especially want to

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> get clobbered, so the coach put me in a marathon that week. They got 21 inches of snow the day before . . . But I ran anyway, mainly because the roads were closed and [I] couldn't get back.

"Try to come out here," he urged his friend, before signing off. "Indubitably in Big Wyoming, Jim."

That summer, Hogue found a job with a professor at the University of Wyoming, which gave him backcountry passes to Rocky Mountain National Park, in Colorado. When Keith Mark came to visit, the two friends immediately set off into the mountains with their sleeping bags and backpacks for what promised to be an outdoor adventure. Hogue's job was collecting butterflies, and when they stopped to camp at night they would lay out a sheet and hook a black light up to a motorcycle battery. The moths would come, and Hogue would put them in a jar of formaldehyde and pin their wings. Searching for an explanation for why someone might want to invent a past, Keith Mark dated the change in his friend to the last day of that trip, when they were caught at the top of a mountain in a fierce summer storm.

"It's that time in the mountains where it's summer and it's sunny," he recalled. "And over the top of the peaks come some black clouds and a strong wind. And the temperature dropped. And I was quite a bit higher in elevation than he was at the time. You know, we were probably half a mile apart. Then, all of a sudden, lightning started just zinging by. And Jim was yelling, 'You gotta get down!' You know, I had my pack with a metal frame. And he was yelling, 'Get down! You gotta get down!' "

As lightning struck the peak, they burrowed into the exposed side of the mountain, which was wet and slippery and beginning to freeze over. Sliding down the side of the mountain in an icy blizzard, Keith Mark made his way to where his friend had stopped. As the lightning struck around them, they got up and ran for the safety of the tree line. "You could feel the ice pelting you, you know? And the lightning was fierce. You could just hear it. It was like running a key down a wire. Makes the hair stand up on your arms, you know? I'm telling you, it was intense. It was the daytime, but you would see the flash and the thunder would just be there. It was unbelievable. And we just sat there. Nobody said anything. We're soaked to the bone. Scared. Cold."

James Hogue didn't say a word when the lightning struck. When the hail stopped, it started to snow, and the two friends, shivering, in shorts, made their way down the mountain, then walked along the road in the hope that someone would pick them up before they were stricken with exposure. Finally, a truck came by and drove them to a convenience store, where they changed their clothes and bought chocolate milk and doughnuts. Hogue remained silent the entire time, or so Keith Mark remembers.

After that day on the mountain, Mark said, Hogue seemed less sure of himself. "There's no doubt in my mind that what turned Jim's world around is what happened that day in Colorado," Mark insisted, many years later. "Maybe he realized that he was a mortal just like everyone else." When Mark visited him in Wyoming the next summer, he found car stereos stacked up in one of the rooms. There were bicycles that Hogue didn't own. The bicycles and the stereos suggested that he was trafficking in stolen goods.

That same summer, James Hogue came over to Mark's house, in Kansas City. When he left, Mark noticed that he was missing a gold medal he had won in the Kansas Relays—one major high-school event that Hogue hadn't won. When he called his friend to ask about the medal, Hogue denied that he had it. A day later, Hogue called back to say that his mother had found the medal on the driveway. Their friendship was over.

Hogue did not return to Laramie. Instead, in 1979, he moved to Texas, attending a community college and then the University of Texas at Austin, where he studied chemical engineering; he stopped taking classes just a few credits shy of gaining a degree. He was arrested on a charge from a bicycle store in Austin, and then he made his way north to Vail.

The record of James Hogue's life is marked by blank spaces, which friends and acquaintances are happy to fill with theories of their own. In 1984, Hogue's former teammate Joseph Nzau broke quickly out in front of the pack during the finals of the marathon in the Los Angeles Olympics and shared the lead for more than twenty miles, before fading at the end of the race. "Undoubtedly, James Hogue saw this on TV," Mike Penney wrote in one of several E-mails he sent me after we spoke. "Did seeing Nzau on the worldwide stage of the Olympics rekindle thoughts of greatness that led to his enrollment at Palo Alto—just months later? Maybe. An interesting coincidence, at least." Or perhaps everything had followed from a typically American moment of grace vouchsafed to a bicycle thief, who woke up one morning in a storage shed in Utah, and decided, again, to become someone new.

## IX—THE CONFIDENCE MAN

James Hogue phoned me three days after I returned from Aspen. He said that he was impressed by the research that had gone into the videotape and the letter, and that he would be happy to meet in New York. When he arrived, a few weeks later, his manner was bashful. He looked down at the ground. His face was youthful but weathered, and he wore a baseball cap over his thinning brown hair. He answered my questions in a way that avoided rudeness while limiting the amount of information he revealed. His expression remained mild and impassive.

Getting into Princeton was like a game, he said. The part he liked best was researching the character and writing the application. He had taken the S.A.T. himself. He had promised not to answer questions about the people he knew at Princeton. It was impossible to say what he planned to do next.

I asked him what the experience of being at Princeton under an assumed identity had felt like. "Let's imagine that I was creating you as a character on paper," I said, after he'd dodged the question a number of times. "What did you love? What made you uncomfortable? What made you happy? What did you do when you were just feeling quiet? What did stuff *mean*, in some emotional sense?"

He was silent. "Well, I had a flicker of an idea and then I forgot it," he finally replied.

One month after our meeting in New York, he made another trip East and we drove down to Princeton. It was funny to be back on campus, he said. He got up the next morning and ran ten miles. Then we went to his old dormitory room, in Holder Hall.

The story Hogue told me corresponded in most of its particulars with the story I had heard before. He was born in Wyandotte County, Kansas. He liked to run. He had read "The Great Gatsby" in high school and was a fan of Geoffrey Wolff's "The Duke of Deception," a memoir about the author's father, an inveterate liar and con artist.

By his own account, James Hogue was an average person. His parents were rural people who had grown up out West, and he had three older sisters. "If I was ten years old and it was the summer I would have probably been out in the yard playing," he recalled. "We had irises growing, so we'd hide in those or play in the tree house or go down to the woods. It was usually pretty hot, so you don't really want to roll around in the grass or anything, with the chiggers and things like that. I really don't remember too much about it." The names of his sisters were Teresa, Vicki, and Betty. His father, Eugene, routed boxcars on the Union Pacific railroad. His mother, Maria, liked to listen to classical music at home.

In junior high school, he said, he was the best runner in Wyandotte County. In high school, the runners were more talented and better coached, and it took him a year to realize that he could run with them, too. He learned to visualize himself winning races. He learned that, in some sense, every race you run is a failure. He learned that there is a time in which you are capable of running the race that stays the same no matter who you become or where you are.

He said he barely remembered the night on the mountain that had so impressed Keith Mark; it was "maybe a little hairy," but it did not affect him in any way. He never expected to be able to beat the Kenyans he ran with in college; they were Olympic-calibre athletes. "You're talking about a one-in-a-billion person. I never thought I would be that good." After the death of a grandmother who lived in Wyoming, he left Laramie and moved to

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Austin. He stopped taking classes when he ran out of money. He felt it was wrong to ask his parents for money, he said. He worked in a lab and built houses.

Q: Is there anything that you've done in your life that you wish you hadn't done?
A: I don't know. I mean, the things that interested me are the abstract things. The specific things I think are boring.
Q: Abstract things? Like what?
A: Why did I do this? Why did that work? Why didn't that work?
Q: Why did you do it? Why didn't it work?
A: Because they found out it was all a fraud.

The questions I was asking him weren't real questions, he explained. They were the products of a story line in my head, whose relation to his life was at best coincidental.

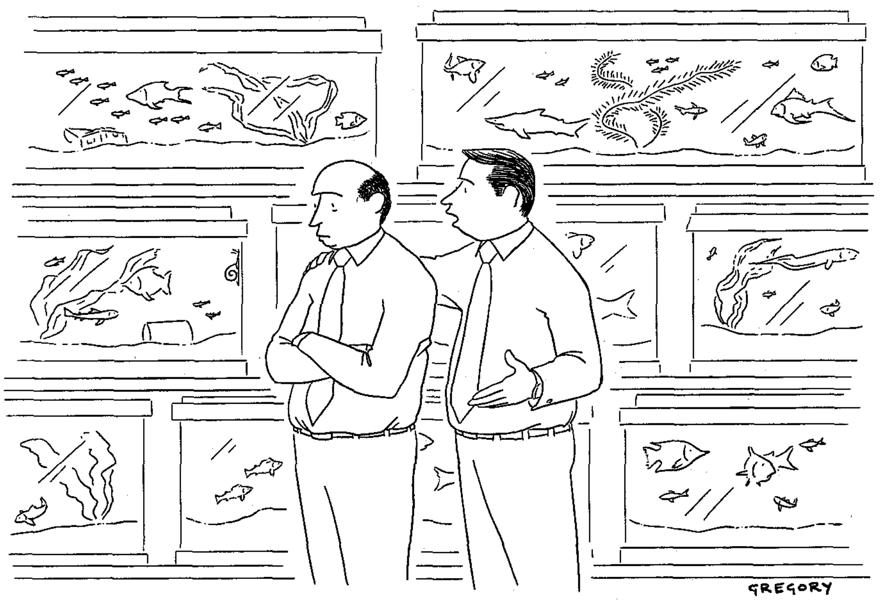
Santana was created when Hogue was living in Las Vegas, building houses during the day and hanging out at the casinos at night. He had remembered hearing about a kid in Wichita, Kansas, who invented a new identity, and he had been struck by the idea. His friends in Las Vegas had helped him create Santana. He said he didn't remember their names. He said a chef from Switzerland had loaned him an address in that country, to which Princeton could send mail.

At Princeton, he remembered, he felt as if he were an actor in a play. "The message I got was that they wanted at least one person who was from a construction site in Las Vegas to go to school here," he said. Princeton wasn't as intellectually rarefied as some might imagine, he added. "They certainly weren't talking about Plato," he said. "I don't think anybody at this school does that."

What stuck in his mind about Princeton, he said, was the way the students often seemed to take their privilege for granted. One student he'd met had forty ties in his closet. "I was thinking to myself, Why does a college student need forty ties?" People seemed unaware that they were rich. He remembered having lunch one day with a girl he didn't know well. "She would be describing her house," he recalled, "and say it has five bedrooms, and they have five cars or something, and I'm, like, 'Wow! You're rich!' And she goes, 'Oh, no. Not at all. You know, we're poor.' " He didn't understand how someone like that could go through life thinking she was poor. "Are these the details that you wanted?" he asked.

Were these his actual impressions of Princeton? There was no way of knowing. He was quick to say that he also met people like Peter Hessler, who ran track, and who went to the library most nights and took reams of notes on the books he read. He came from a town in Missouri, Hogue recalled, and later became a Rhodes Scholar. He liked to shoot water balloons across the quad with launchers made out of surgical tubing. So it was hard to say that the people he met at Princeton were alike in any one way.

"How would the world be different if



*"Relax, Harvey. Even in a recession, people need rare tropical fighting fish."*

people were allowed to make up any story they wanted, and call it *their* story?" I asked him.

"They *are* allowed to do that," he said. "Somebody invented whatever name you got. And, up to a certain point in life, that's all you have. And then you start obtaining your own things. So I guess I see it more as an evolution within the self. And I think it occurs in everybody." He admitted that what he had done belonged, perhaps, to a different category of invention. "I was just using the basic fact that people are going to believe whatever they're told unless they have a good reason not to," he said. What made his actions possible, he explained, was his ability to tolerate guilt. His habit of wearing a mask was simply an impulse that he couldn't control. "Say you're a diabetic," he explained. "You know you can't eat certain foods, but you do it anyway." He paused for a moment. "Somebody might hypothesize about it, but I don't see that anyone knows enough about why people do things to be able to tell me why." We had been together at Princeton now for three days straight, and there were still many questions that I wished to ask, and that I hoped he might answer.

"What are you doing now?" I asked him.

"I'm building a house," he said.

What I discovered by the end of our interviews was how difficult it would always be to disentangle the facts of his life from the fabrications. Some of the stories were verifiable. Others were not. And the indeterminacy of his story, its resistance to interpretation, was clearly intended by its author. The story of his life would have little, if anything, to do with whatever version of that story I might choose to write.

At one point during our conversation in Holder Hall, a Princeton freshman named Dennis Dugan entered the room to retrieve his coat.

"It seems like everyone is a Princeton alumnus," Dugan said. The freshman was open-faced and enthusiastic. He was eager to meet somebody who had lived in his room however many years ago. Hogue was eager to talk to him, too. He was glad to play the role of a Princeton alumnus, offering avuncular advice about the eating clubs and the food.

"A lot of people tend to put the little stickers on their cars," he said. "So you'll see that and you'll probably stop and talk to them. There's one fellow in Aspen. Oh, he must be sixty or seventy. He's got a bright-orange car, with the tiger on the antenna and stickers in the windows. You'll see stuff like that. And you'll probably go to work on Wall Street, and I'm sure you'll run into people there."

"They say college is the best time of your life," Dugan said. "Do you believe that?"

"I think it's supposed to be," Jim responded.

"What are some of *your* memories, Jim?" I asked.

"He's living them," Hogue answered. "He'll remember." He turned to Dugan. "I mean, have you had your nude Olympics yet?"

The freshman seemed to want to maintain the fleeting connection to a person who had gone this way before. "I bet he has great memories of this place," Dugan said, turning to me. "I bet he had a lot of fun here. I bet it really helped him out. Not just the diploma itself but the actual things that he learned while obtaining that diploma . . . Not just the actual facts and figures and theory, just the existence, how to exist with people."

Dugan had worked hard to get to Princeton, he said. He had grown up in New Jersey in a middle-class family, just above the line that allows you to raise your head to see the path before you and win a scholarship to prep school. The day he found out he was accepted at Princeton was the best day of his life. "For the week after that, I was sort of in disbelief," he went on.

"So you would tell all your friends to work hard and to do—"

"Yeah. I tell my little brother every day," Dugan said.

"How old is he?" Hogue asked.

"He's eight."

"Because," Hogue said, "they really like to let in brothers and sisters and friends."

The freshman nodded. He liked that idea. He would grow older, protected by the circle of shared experience and tradition that binds Princetonians together, secure in the benefits of a good education and a wealth of useful contacts that would ease his way through the snares and thickets of life. Being accepted at Princeton was a blessing, he said. Everything he had seen about the place was exactly as it was described in the brochures. ♦

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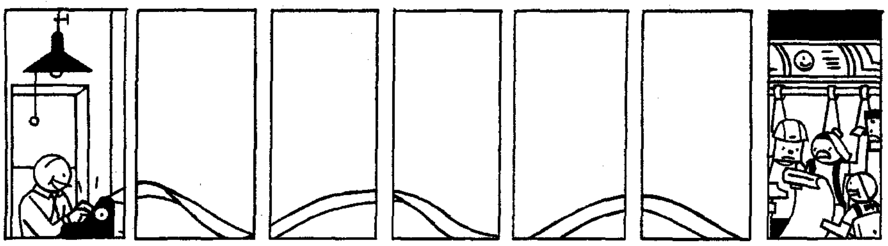

## BOOKS

# SIREN SONGS

*The poet-diva Edna St. Vincent Millay is the subject of two new Lives.*

### BY JUDITH THURMAN

Edna St. Vincent Millay must surely be the only poet loved by both Thomas Hardy and Dave Garroway. In Hardy's view, America had produced two cultural artifacts that could be considered great—the skyscraper and Millay's verse. When Garroway was the host of "Wide Wide World," one of television's first magazine shows (1955 to 1958), he signed off after every broadcast by reciting four lines from the last stanza of "Renascence," a poem written by Millay when she was nineteen:

> The world stands out on either side
> No wider than the heart is wide;
> Above the world is stretched the sky—
> No higher than the soul is high.

The audience of "Wide Wide World" probably knew where the lines came from. Millay had been hugely popular between the two world wars. A volume of her sonnets sold fifty thousand copies in the depths of the Depression. Hardy and Garroway weren't her only unlikely fans. Arthur Symons compared her to Keats and Poe; Kenneth Tynan loved her dramatic verse; and Edmund Wilson called her "one of the only poets writing in English . . . who have attained to anything like the stature of great literary figures." But rarely has an idol so widely revered suffered such a drastic devaluation in her own lifetime. Millay received what the French call a *coup de vieux*—a brutal and sudden blow of age—and it fell at about the same moment on her beauty and her reputation.

For more than a decade, 1935 to 1946, Millay was a serious junkie. At the peak of her addiction, the "elfin" poet, five feet one inch and a hundred pounds, was dosing herself around the clock with nearly two hundred milligrams of morphine a day (ten is the standard dose for a terminal cancer patient). By the time she died, at fifty-eight, in October of 1950, she had reduced her abject dependence on narcotics, though even after several hospitalizations for alcohol- and drug-related nervous breakdowns she defined sobriety as restricting her daily liquor intake to a litre and a half of wine. While there were no witnesses to her death (Millay had been widowed for a year and was living alone on her country estate, Steepletop, near Austerlitz, New York), the scene, like many from her life and work, seems overplayed, as if fate had resorted to an old screenwriter's cliché. Working late and drinking hard, Millay pitched down a dark flight of stairs and broke her neck. The next day, a hired man found the corpse in a silk dressing gown on the bloodstained landing. Millay's head was resting beside a notebook that contained the draft of a poem. She had circled its last three lines:

> I will control myself, or go inside.
> I will not flaw perfection with my grief.
> Handsome, this day: no matter who has
> died.

Millay and her husband, Eugen Boissevain, had no children and had wanted none. "I have never settled down," she once told an interviewer. "I could never have married the kind of person with whom I would have had to settle down. . . . My husband is responsive to my every mood. That's the only way in which I can live and be what I am." Her estate passed to a younger sister, Norma Millay Ellis. There had been another sister, Kathleen, a minor poet, novelist, and paranoid who died in 1943, and a formidable, self-sacrificing mother, Cora, who also wrote poetry but had supported her girls (she was divorced from their hapless father) as an itinerant practical nurse and weaver of hairpieces. All the Millays sewed, swept, cooked, laundered, sang, acted, and were lovely. If the poet's hardscrabble but artistic New England girlhood reads like "Little Women," by the time her sisters and mother joined her in the seething Greenwich Village of its glory days, just after the First World War, their family life had become a bohemian takeoff of that Puritan morality tale, with Vincent, as she was called, hogging the roles of both Amy and Jo, and Marmee-Cora rolling the cigarettes, slugging back the gin, and telling the shockable Edmund Wilson that she "had been a slut herself so why shouldn't her girls be?" The Millay "theater piece"—as Nancy Milford observes in "Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay" (Random House; $29.95), which will be published this fall—was "their story of triumph over adversity, one of the best women's stories there is in America: hopeful, enduring, centered in family, and fraudulent . . . because it was built on so much unadmitted pain."

It's striking how many writers of both sexes have been offspring of mothers like Cora Millay, exceptional women disappointed in marriage and thwarted in ambition and desire who give all and ask for nothing except that the special child live gloriously enough for two. It's also striking how often their children, though they may be self-serving and rebellious in other respects and relations, shoulder the burden of making such mothers complete—giving them an enhanced reality—and perhaps that task, inherently impossible to finish, is fundamental to art. The farewell letter that Cora wrote to Edna as her daughter was about to sail from New York for Paris, in 1921, to become a foreign correspondent for *Vanity Fair*, suggests the arche-

*Millay the dainty, best-selling rhapsodic poet was also a drunk, a drug addict, and a prodigious bisexual erotomane.*

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

typal bond from the mother's point of view: "There can be no real separation for two like us." A stanza that Edna wrote after Cora's death, in 1931, captures it from the child's:

> In this mound, and what's beneath,
> Is my cure, if cure there be;
> I must starve, or eat your death
> Till it nourish me.

After Edna's death, her sister Norma moved into Steepletop, where she slept in the poet's bed and left the dead woman's clothes hanging in the closet. Norma published an edition of the "Collected Poems," but, rudely or coyly depending upon the suitor, blocked access to the juicy papers, intending one day to write what she called "The Biography." In 1972, when she was seventy-eight, Norma finally decided that this task might better be entrusted to a sympathetic professional, and her choice fell upon Milford, whose life of Zelda Fitzgerald, Edna St. Vincent Millay's contemporary, was one of the big literary events of the feminist new wave—the first liberation of a madwoman from the attic—selling more than a million copies. When Norma died in 1986, Milford was fourteen years along and only halfway to her last page. In 1999, another potential biographer, Daniel Mark Epstein, himself a poet, discovered that the unpublished diaries, journals, and letters Milford had been working with—some twenty thousand documents—were now at the Library of Congress, and he soon secured permission from a new executor to consult them. Epstein's life, "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed: The Loves and Love Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay" (Henry Holt; $26), will also be published this fall, along with "The Selected Poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay" (Modern Library; $16.95), edited and introduced by Milford.

"Savage Beauty" is a five-hundred-page distillation that was nearly thirty years in the making. "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed," half the size, was researched and written in about eighteen months. But haste can sometimes, paradoxically, work to a biographer's advantage. It spares one from the fatigue, introspection, disillusionment, eclipse of an overview, corrosion of confidence, and mixed emotions attendant upon any long and troubled intimacy (but also essential to understanding it). There is something to be said in art as in love for the week of living dangerously, and Millay kept saying it. A life as messy as hers—glittering but repetitive—and an œuvre as uneven can benefit from compression. Epstein's chronicle is well researched and briskly narrated, without an iota of wit but with intelligence, and his ear is often keener than Milford's for the telling quote. He makes at least two revelations she seems to have missed—of Millay's first homosexual experience, with a girl in Maine, and of her late, ruinous obsession with horse racing. If only his style were not so perfervid, so riddled with italics, so defensive—even surly—about his status, in relation to Milford, as the tenacious underdog. While Epstein is eager to rehabilitate Millay's "genius" and to restore her to what he believes is her rightful place as one of the great love poets of all time, he does little to convince the reader of his claims beyond using adjectives like "immortal." He is more persuasive in establishing Millay's bona fides as a "sex goddess," frothing over her "red integuments" and "secret circles and folds"; her petite, "34-22-34" figure with its "surprisingly large" breasts; and the "crimson flame of her hair—not carrot-colored, let no one call it that." He adds that there is "a beautiful switch of the poet's hair still kept in her bureau drawer in tissue, eerily as fresh and vivid as the day it was harvested. . . . I have heard that a man before me fainted at the sight of it." According to Epstein, "poetry is the exercise of hyperbole." But biography isn't.

The authorized life is an ample, sober book in which Milford, without losing her senses, accounts for most of the integuments Millay once kissed. But she doesn't persuade me any more than Epstein does that her subject is a great poet. Nothing can shake my conviction that a great poet would never, under any circumstances, publish lines such as "Down, you mongrel, Death! / Back into your kennel! / I have stolen breath / In a stalk of fennel!" (Curiously, the Modern Library anthology that Milford edited includes nothing Millay wrote after 1923, thus omitting her fine late sonnets and giving no sense of her trajectory as a writer.)

At times, "Savage Beauty" seems like a collage, or a garment much altered—let out and taken in—whose new seams don't quite match up. Milford punctuates the narrative with frequent asides in the form of an ongoing dialogue—a tug-of-war—with her patron and primary source, Norma, the poet's vestal and the biographer's Nemesis, who dropped cryptic hints about deeper mysteries that remained unsolved and let slip that she had destroyed certain overly revealing or unseemly materials, including pornographic photographs. These encounters, usually over drinks, which sometimes included Norma's husband, Charlie, who enjoyed deflating the Millay hype, are not well enough developed to be more than a distraction, and one senses a competing story—Milford's—straining for expression. Yet Milford understands something fundamental that Epstein doesn't, which is that to tackle a siren you have to resist her seductions. With patience and guile, she has done so and survived. So has what's most affectingly human about Millay.

Millay, whose genteel-sounding middle name pays homage to the eponymous Greenwich Village hospital where an uncle had received life-saving care, was a great literary rake in the Romantic tradition. Her affairs with men and women were the fresh wood she fed to the fire of her poetry, often several logs at a time. In any affair, one person loves more than the other, but Millay was almost invariably the better loved. In his memoir "The Shores of Light," Edmund Wilson claims that she could show "invincible magnanimity" to those she had cast off (he was himself a castoff), and lavishness is certainly one of her finest qualities. But the compulsive seducer is often a man or woman who suffers from a morbid fear of being abandoned and takes pleasure in inflicting abandonment. This was true of Millay, who could be spectacularly cavalier. The bite of her best love poetry comes from its heartlessness and the swagger of its virtuosity.

A Maine Yankee with Irish blood (and Irish wit, coloring, and propensity for high drama and strong drink), Millay was born in 1892, which places her in the fin-de-siècle generation of Pound, Eliot, Marianne Moore, H.D., and William Carlos Williams. Her antipathy to the modernist revolution, about which neither of her biographers has any comment, was that of a Papist at the time of the Reformation. Epstein does compare "Renascence," fantastically, to Eliot's late poems: "There can be no more precise account of the psychic burden of the great poet, the *moral* poet." But Millay loathed Eliot (along with Pound and Auden), and wrote a satire of "The Waste Land," priding herself that it wasn't "abusive . . . merely murderous." In this regard, it's interesting to consider the lines from which Milford, apparently without irony, takes her bodice ripper's title:

> I am waylaid by Beauty. Who will walk
> Between me and the crying of the frogs?
> Oh, savage Beauty, suffer me to pass,
> That am a timid woman, on her way
> From one house to another!

One of Pound's best dicta was "No metaphors that won't permit examination." Millay's modest contribution to modernity was not as a Little Red Riding Hood in a dark wood; it was to write—on her wolfish way from one bed to another—with supreme boldness about her lust and to live her woman's life with supreme disregard for anything but her art and pleasure. By adolescence, she had done enough housework and child care for a lifetime. She treated suitors for her hand as she later, laughingly, claimed to treat her publishers: "Although I reject their proposals, I welcome their advances." Her style of bardic charisma vanished from poetry with the Beats, but it survives in the world of rock music.

If Millay was a "genius," it was as a diva, and in her odd mixture of venality and idealism she resembles the nineteenth-century actress who is the heroine of Susan Sontag's novel "In America." To the crowds who came to hear them recite in provincial halls across the country, American high culture meant a double bill of Elizabethan drama and French boudoir farce performed in Victorian costume with a British accent. The verse Millay declaimed in her mesmerizing voice—

> Nay learnèd doctor, these fine leeches fresh
> From the pond's edge my cause cannot remove:
> Alas, the sick disorder in my flesh
> Is deeper than your skill, is very love.

—now seems as ersatz as the high-flown pastiche that A. S. Byatt supplies in wholesale quantities for her imaginary Pre-Raphaelites. A great poem of any age and in whatever style restores the unmediated innocence of experience and sensation, while a dated poem merely reminds one of how innocent one used to be. Where Millay's work is still alive on the page, it's as a form of musical notation that preserves the allure of a subversive personality, or in a handful of lyrics that transcend her false distinction between the poetic and the mundane—which was the same line she drew between her own priestly entitlements and those of laymen.

The hundred and seven couplets of tightly rhymed tetrameter about cosmic sorrow and ecstatic rebirth that constitute "Renascence" were composed by the teen-age Millay in 1911 and published in a widely reviewed anthology called "The Lyric Year," an event that made the precocious girl a minor literary celebrity. The attack of claustrophobia she describes—the narrator is buried alive by the sins of the world ("Ah, awful weight! Infinity / Pressed down upon the finite Me!")—had much to do with the privations of Millay's childhood. But at a recital in her confining home town, Camden, Maine, she impressed a rich and well-connected bluestocking—Caroline Dow, the dean of the Y.W.C.A. Training School in New York, who rescued her. Miss Dow invited Millay to stay at the Y, bought her some decent clothes, introduced her to the grandees at the Poetry Society of America and the MacDowell Club, and arranged for her to attend Vassar. Epstein and Milford disagree about the extent of Millay's sexual experience at this point, but she had already begun to smoke and drink, to flirt expertly with older men in a position to advance her career, and to sleep with girls. In the dorms at Vassar, she lorded it over a harem of smitten younger classmates, who revered her as their Sappho.

Between scripting and starring in virginal college pageants, Millay misbehaved so egregiously, at least by the standards of propriety then in effect for female undergraduates, that she was nearly banned from her commencement. In Greenwich Village, though, the proper thing was to be as disreputable as possible. Once on her own there, she consorted with radicals like John Reed, Floyd Dell, and Max Eastman, editors of *The Masses*, who were then on trial for sedition. Millay herself was never a leftist, but she liked cutting a heroic figure in the service of a good cause. In 1927, she was jailed for marching in a demonstration against the death sentences of Sacco and Vanzetti, and her poem on their execution, "Justice Denied in Massachusetts," became as famous as "Renascence." In the thirties, she pitted her celebrity against the Lindberghs' to publicize the evils of isolationism. In the forties, she spoke out against Hitler—bravely and in anguish—in radio broadcasts, interviews, and verse "lamentations." But guests invited to Steepletop were always reminded to bring their evening clothes, for the Boissevains liked, as she said, to "live in grand style," and Millay treated her help as badly as her lovers: "The only people I really hate are servants. They are not really human beings at all."

In the beginning, of course, Millay couldn't afford servant problems. The chances of living in grand style on a poet's wages were as dim in 1917 as they have always been, and, hoping for a lucrative stage career, she studied acting with the Broadway star Edith Wynne Matthison, from whom she acquired a

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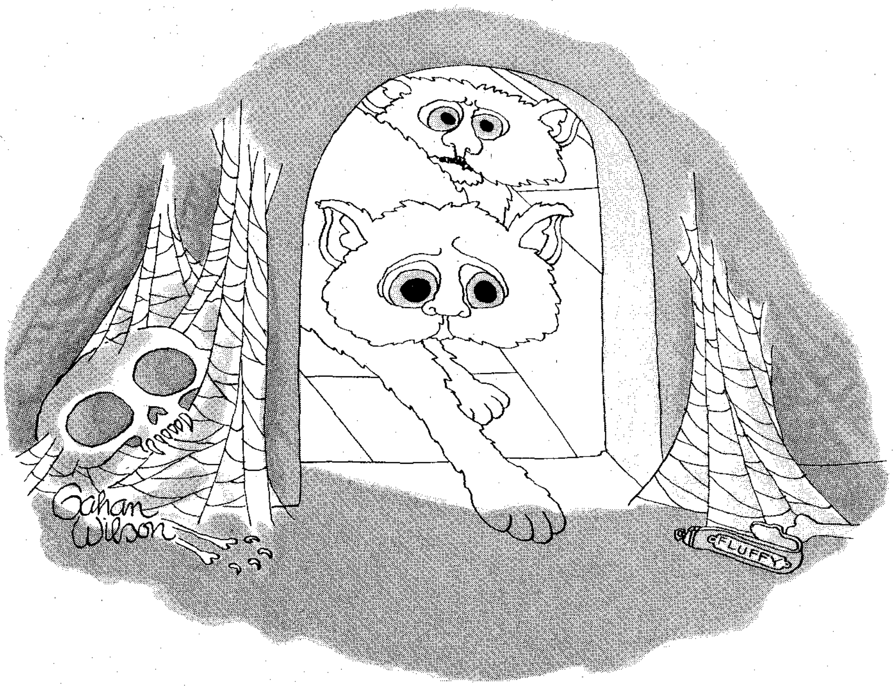

*"I wouldn't if I were you!"*

vaguely British accent, though she also practiced cursing while darning socks in her "hell hole" on Waverly Place: "Needle in, shit. Needle out, piss. Needle in, fuck. Needle out, cunt." Floyd Dell, one of her lovers, recruited her talents as an actor, dramatist, and director for the Provincetown Players, where her greatest triumph was "Aria da Capo" (1919), an antiwar play in the style of the commedia dell'arte, with Norma Millay in the starring role. "You should see this bitterly ironic little fantasy by Edna St. Vincent Millay," Alexander Woollcott wrote in the *Times*. "This is the most beautiful and most interesting play in the English language now to be seen in New York." It was also during these buoyant Village years that Millay promoted her marquee name as a femme fatale with impious little jingles—advertisements for wantonness—that everyone recited:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light!

When *Vanity Fair* sent Millay to Europe in 1921, to be its first foreign correspondent, she landed in Paris, as she had arrived in the Village, at the height of its glamour as a haven for refugees from convention. She caroused with the expatriates at the Rotonde, including Fitzgerald, with whom she was not impressed. She described him to Wilson as being like "a stupid old woman with whom someone has left a diamond." She travelled with admirers to Italy, Hungary, and—on horseback—through the wilds of Albania. She made some desultory passes at a novel for which she had received a big advance, but ran through the money and got into debt. Her editor at the magazine offered to double her stipend if she would drop the pseudonym she used for her dispatches ("Nancy Boyd"), but she refused: the inviolate name was reserved for literature. Yet, in two years abroad, "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver" was her only work of distinction. This dark fairy tale in twenty-nine singsong verses is narrated by an orphan whose destitute mother weaves him a prince's wardrobe on her magic instrument, then dies of the exertion. Milford relates the central metaphor to the maternal sacrifices of Cora Millay, and describes the unstated drama succinctly as "matricide cloaked in sentiment." But how could the fantasy of a sumptuous fashion windfall not appeal to a fanatic clotheshorse living on the cheap in Paris? When Wilson came to see Millay, he found her "better dressed" than she had ever been, and better "cared for," by which he seems to imply "kept." The "girl poet," now thirty, was eminently resourceful. She continued to rack up conquests, specializing in attached men and fragile youths, and leaving behind a wake, as she puts it in a poem, of "fresh wreckage." Eventually, she suffered one of her "extravagant" depressions, accompanied by a mysterious intestinal blockage for which she blamed the rich food, but which Epstein diagnoses as a case of Crohn's disease, and retreated from the Continent—pregnant—to a cottage in the English countryside, where her mother, who had come for a visit, induced an abortion with a brew of herbs.

In May of 1923, on the basis of "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver," "A Few Figs from Thistles," and eight sonnets, Millay received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. She had just met Boissevain, the housemate of Max Eastman, at a party in Croton-on-Hudson, which was then a colony of artists and intellectuals who had left the Village to escape the tourists. Fellow-guests watched the couple fall in love "violently and in public," as Floyd Dell put it, and they were married that July. Boissevain was a Dutch-born widower twelve years her senior, the scion of a distinguished liberal family in the newspaper business. As a young man, he had rowed in the Olympics and been analyzed by Carl Jung. When he met Millay, he earned his living as an importer in the East India trade, and though his fortunes were unstable, he had the means to install her in a "dollhouse" on Bedford Street in New York, buy her a diamond bracelet, an emerald ring worth forty thousand dollars, a lavish wardrobe, and the four-hundred-acre farm upstate.

Perhaps Boissevain's generous and sunny character speaks well for Jung's gifts as a therapist. No knight (or governess) from a romance novel has ever possessed such a collection of improbably paired virtues as did this paragon, who was handsome without being vain, virile yet tender, solid but never dull, and a tireless though unjealous protector: the ideal mate and perfect foil for a fragile monomaniac like Millay. One of their cattier acquaintances likened Boissevain to a "cruise director," and for the next twenty-five years he directed their life as smoothly as the storms of Millay's nature would permit. He kept their house, farmed their land, entertained their friends, and stage-managed her career, which, after he lost his money, supported them in the style to which they had both become accustomed: "pigs in clover."

In 1926, Millay wrote the libretto for an opera by Deems Taylor, "The King's Henchman," set in tenth-century England, which was one of the most successful productions ever mounted at the Metropolitan Opera. (It has never been revived.) She published eight more books of verse, including one for children, and a translation of Baudelaire's "Fleurs du Mal," a joint venture with her last great love, the poet George Dillon, who was fourteen years her junior and the only man to break her heart. Even when her work received cool reviews, as in the mid-thirties it began to, with critics complaining, Milford notes, "that her celebrity had outstripped her poetry and that the younger generation was moving on," Millay remained wildly popular. A reporter predicted that she would become "a bookseller's staple, like Shakespeare and ink and two-cent stamps." Her strenuous cross-country reading tours still attracted rapt crowds, high fees, and fawning publicity. According to Milford, "It was the . . . emotional vibrance of her voice that held her audiences to her. Yet it was odd that this . . . woman would still alternate her serious lyrics with her girlish kiddie poems." It wasn't odd: Millay was a consummate performer, but her motor ran on adulation, and, like alcohol, it warped her judgment of how much she could take before she embarrassed herself.

The Romantics of the nineteen-twenties had a lot in common with their counterparts of the early nineteenth century, and, as Wilson observed, it was difficult for those among them who survived their wars, vices, and breakdowns—their "scorn for safe living and expediency"—to "slow down and slough off their youth, when . . . they had been able to treat their genius as an unlimited checking account." Boissevain, robust himself but complacent, did nothing to temper or contain Millay's reckless voracity. His "child" missed the sea? They bought an island. She needed the stimulus of a young man's passion? He left her to him. Her nerves craved an anodyne? He supplied it. Toward the end, he was shooting her up, and himself, too. Milford belatedly allows that their relationship "had turned into a destructive dependence," while Epstein continues to see this service in an Orphic light: "He would follow her into hell to be with her and to lead her out . . . or they would both die there together."

In 1940, Hitler overran the Low Countries and Boissevain lost contact with his family. Millay, a year into menopause, was getting fat and blowsy. She had never recovered from Dillon's rejection, which confirmed the tragic news announced by her mirror—and her reviews—that she had lost her erotic power. When she published her last book of poems, "Make Bright the Arrows"—a quixotic and grandiose but just and heartfelt work of anti-Nazi propaganda—she was accused of prostituting her talent and tarnishing her name. (No one had lodged any such protests when she was writing propaganda for free love.) By now, she was smoking hash to calm down, popping speed to wake up, drinking to pass out, and hiding her syringes. She stopped writing except for her drug log and an excruciating journal. ("Things I *must* do for Eugen if I truly love him. . . . Even if I am suffering TORMENT, speak in a voice with *no hint* of pain.")

In 1949, Boissevain died of lung cancer. Two weeks later, Millay was admitted to Doctors Hospital suffering from "acute neurasthenia" aggravated by malnutrition and cirrhosis of the liver. After her discharge, she returned to Steepletop with a nurse, and the local postmistress handled her correspondence. Then that spring she announced, "It's time I stopped being such a baby." She had never lived alone, but in the months before her fatal fall she was planning a solitary trip to Ragged Island, her retreat off the coast of Maine.

Millay's poetry, wrote her old flame Edmund Wilson, "will always be there to make the casualties of her life seem unimportant," but he was wrong. It is as a resplendent casualty of sex, drugs, and fame that she lives on. ♦

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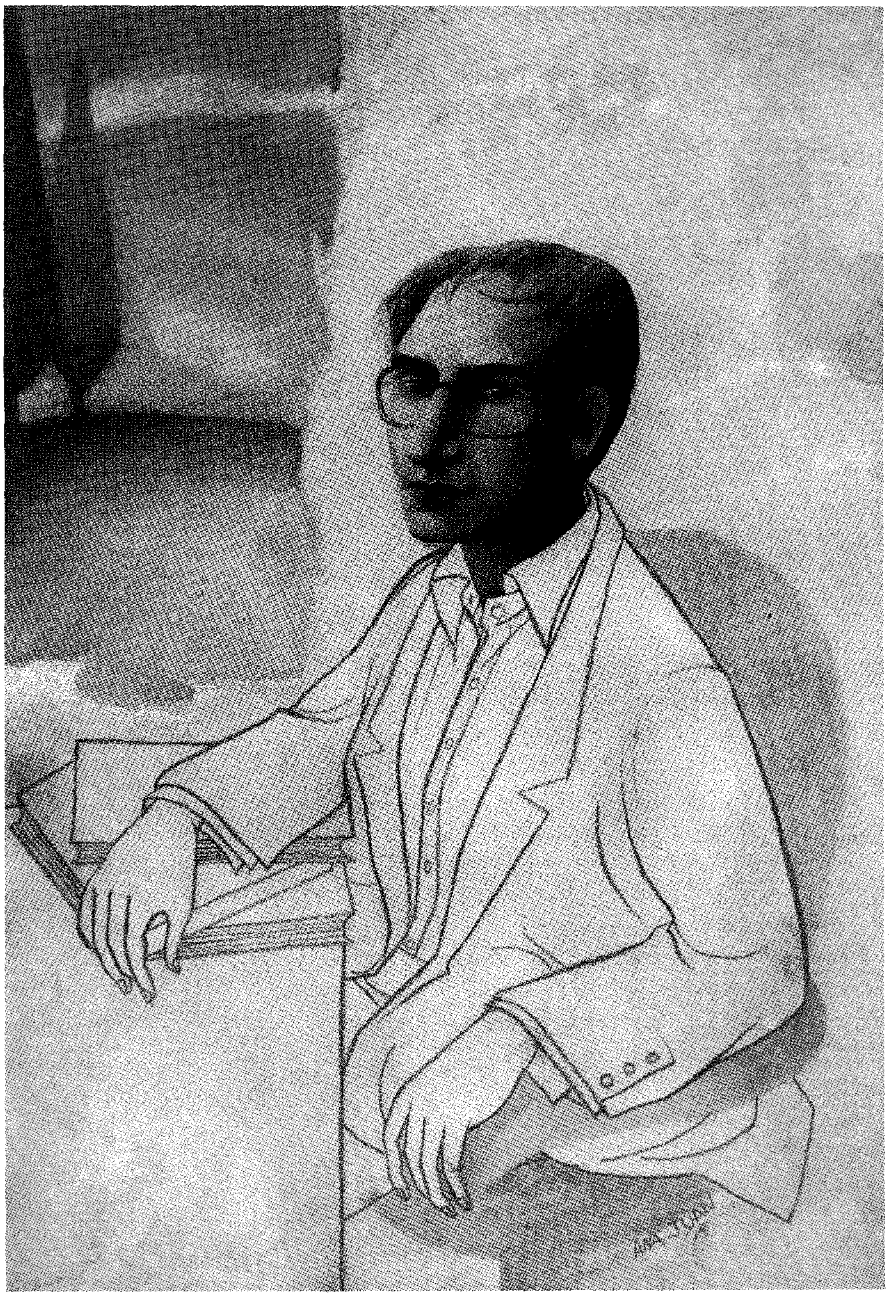
# MURDER IN MINIATURE

*A sixteenth-century detective story explores the soul of Turkey.*

BY JOHN UPDIKE



*Pamuk's new novel, "My Name Is Red," is haunted by enigma and doubleness.*

Orhan Pamuk is a fifty-year-old Turk frequently hailed as his country's foremost novelist. He is both avant-garde and best-selling. His eminence, like that of the Albanian Ismail Kadare, looms singularly; Western culture-consumers, it may be, don't expect Turkey and Albania to produce novelists at all—at least, novelists so wise in the ways of modernism and postmodernism. Pamuk, the grandson of a wealthy factory director and railroad builder, has been privileged to write without needing to make a living by it. From a family of engineers, he studied engineering, architecture, and journalism, and practiced none of them. Until the age of thirty, he lived with his parents, writing novels that did not get published. When literary success dawned, he married, and now, living in Istanbul with his wife and daughter, he composes, according to an interview he gave *Publishers Weekly* in 1994, from eleven at night till four in the morning and again, after arising at noon, from two in the afternoon till eight. The results have been prodigious: six novels that recapitulate in Turkish the twentieth-century novel's major modes. His first, "Cevdet Bey and His Sons," was likened to Thomas Mann's "Buddenbrooks"; his next, "The Silent House," a multiply narrated week of family interaction, suggested to critics Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner; his third, "The White Castle," a creepy seventeenth-century tale of double identity, evoked comparison to Borges and Calvino; the fourth, "The Black Book," a missing-persons adventure saturated in details of Istanbul, was written, by Pamuk's own admission, with Joyce's "Ulysses" in mind; the fifth, "The New Life," a dreamlike first-person contemporary tale, was described by a reviewer as "Kafka with a light touch"; and the sixth, "My Name Is Red" (translated from the Turkish by Erdağ Göknar; Knopf; $25.95), a murder mystery set in sixteenth-century Istanbul, uses the art of miniature illumination, much as Mann's "Doctor Faustus" did music, to explore a nation's soul.

"My Name Is Red" weighs in, with its appended chronology, at more than four hundred big pages and belongs, in its high color and scholarly density, with other recent novels that load extensive book learning onto a detective-story plot: A. S. Byatt's "Possession" and Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose" and "Foucault's Pendulum." One worries, with such ambitious flights, whether they aren't a bit narrow-shouldered for the task—whether the rather ironically melodramatic story can carry its burden of pedantry and large import. Nineteenth-century novelists catered to a more generous, less nibbled attention span; they breathed with bigger lungs and naturally wrote

ANA JUAN

long, deep, and wide. Although Pamuk demonstrates the patience and constructive ability of the nineteenth-century fabricators and their heirs Proust and Mann, his instinctive affinity lies with the relatively short-winded Calvino and Borges, philosophical artificers of boxes within boxes. Pamuk's boxes are bigger, but the toylike feeling persists, of craftsmanship exulting in its powers, of giant gadgets like those with which the Europeans used to woo Turkey's sultan with evidence of Western technology.

Pamuk's ingenuity is yoked to a profound sense of enigma and doubleness. The doubleness, he has said, derives from that of Turkey itself, a nation straddling Asia and Europe and divided between the progressive "Kemalist" heritage of Kemal Ataturk's radical reforms of 1924—secularism in government, public education for all, voting rights for women, the replacement of the Arabic alphabet with the Roman one—and conservative Islam, now resurgent as a repressive, potentially violent fundamentalism from Morocco to Malaysia.

The ostensible topic of "My Name Is Red" is the threatened Westernization of Ottoman pictorial art, an offshoot, protected by Sultan Murat III (r. 1574-95), of the Persian tradition of miniature painting. To honor the thousandth anniversary (measured in lunar years) of the Hegira, which occurred in 622 A.D., an illustrated book is being prepared for the Sultan in the "Frankish," or "Venetian," style of receding perspective and recognizable individual portraiture. In the first chapter of "My Name Is Red," a miniaturist named Elegant, a specialist in gilding, objects so strenuously to the blasphemy of this stylistic change that another miniaturist, unidentified, kills him and drops his body down a well. Later, the same assailant kills Enishte ("Uncle"), the organizer of this dangerous book. One of three miniaturists involved—who are named, in picturesque Ottoman style, Butterfly, Olive, and Stork—must be the murderer. The detective, for want of another, is Enishte's nephew, Black, who has returned to Istanbul "like a sleepwalker" after twelve years spent in Persia, "carrying letters and collecting taxes" and "working as a secretary in the service of pashas." In his youth, he studied with the miniaturist apprentices but did not last the course; he exiled himself after Enishte rejected his suit for the hand of Enishte's daughter, Shekure. Now Black has been summoned back by his uncle to help him organize the book for the Sultan. When Enishte is slain, Shekure, whose first husband disappeared in battle four years earlier, hastily weds Black but will not let the marriage be consummated until he brings the murderer to justice.

This curious, sumptuous, protracted thriller consists of fifty-nine chapters told from a total of twelve viewpoints, including that of the murderer. The two slain characters address us from the afterlife, and we are even treated, at the end of the longest chapter, to the viewpoint of a severed head, whose eyes and brain continue, in morose fashion, to function for an interim. The reader participates, wincingly, in two blindings by means of the very needle (a "turquoise-and-mother-of-pearl-handled golden needle used to fasten plumes to turbans") with which the supreme master of Persian miniatures, Bihzad of Herat (c. 1460-1535), blinded himself, by one interpretation, "to make the statement that whosoever beheld the pages of this book"—the Mongol "Book of Kings"—"even once would no longer wish to see anything else in this world" or else, by another theory, to avoid being forced to paint in an uncongenial way for the new conqueror of Herat.

Black, as he rushes about Istanbul trying to win Shekure's heart with feats of detection, relates the most chapters, twelve. Shekure relates eight chapters, and these speed by with the most ease and psychological interest; in her voice the novel becomes a romantic one, driven by emotion and intimate concerns. Preoccupied with her own feelings, her own survival, and the protection of her two young sons, she rarely lectures us on the nuances, stylistic and religious, of Persian-style miniatures. When other characters do, "My Name Is Red" acquires the brilliant stasis of the depictions themselves, and seems to go nearly nowhere. Esther, a Jewish clothes peddler and matchmaker who furthers Shekure's amorous affairs, is another welcome female voice in this stiflingly male world. At the men-only coffeehouse behind the slave market, an unnamed storyteller—a "curtain-caller," in Persian terminology—performs nine impertinent, irreverent monologues based on rough drawings supplied by the miniaturists. After taking on the personae of a dog, a tree, a coin, Death, the color crimson, a horse, Satan, and two dervishes, he surpasses himself with a discourse on the topic of Woman. He realizes that in his society the topic is pretty well covered up:

> In the cities of the European Franks, women roam about exposing not only their faces but also their brightly shining hair (after their necks, their most attractive feature), their arms, their beautiful throats, and even, if what I've heard is true, a portion of their gorgeous legs; as a result, the men of those cities walk about with difficulty, embarrassed and in extreme pain, because, you see, their front sides are always erect and this fact naturally leads to the paralysis of their society as a whole. Undoubtedly, this is why each day the Frank infidel surrenders another fortress to us Ottomans.

Though celibate, the storyteller as a youth succumbed, he confesses, to his curiosity about this exotic gender and tried on the clothes of his mother and his aunt; instantly he was invaded by tinglings of feminine sensitivity, along with "an irrepressible affection toward all children" and a desire "to nurse everybody and cook for the whole world." When he stuffed his aunt's pistachio-green silk shirt with socks and cloths to simulate breasts, he enjoyed a rich range of contradictory feelings:

> I understood at once that men, merely catching sight of the shadow of my overabundant breasts, would chase after them and strive to take them into their mouths; I felt quite powerful, but is that what I wanted? I was befuddled: I wanted both to be powerful and to be the object of pity; I wanted a rich, powerful and intelligent man, whom I didn't know from Adam, to fall madly in love with me; yet I also feared such a man.

These androgynous intuitions lead the storyteller to sing of the doubleness that haunts the novel: "*My other parts insist I be a woman when I'm a man and a man when I'm a woman. / How difficult it is to be human, even worse is living a human's life. / I only want to amuse myself* *frontside and backside, to be Eastern and Western both.*"

Shortly after this recitation, the storyteller is killed by a mob of the followers of the cleric Nusret of Erzurum, who preaches that the woes besetting Istanbul—fires, plagues, war casualties, counterfeit coins, decadent drugged behavior of dervishes and others—should be laid "to our having strayed from the path of the Prophet, to disregard for the strictures of the Glorious Koran." Pamuk (who, in his interview with *Publishers Weekly*, pointed out that he was the first person in Turkey to defend Salman Rushdie and claimed that in his childhood "religion was something that belonged to the poor and the servants") makes us tremble for the fate of storytellers in a culture where, to quote him again, "the fundamentalist movement [is] the revenge of the poor against the educated, westernized Turks." The *Times* last June gave a grim report on the condition of books and fiction in Muslim lands. "In recent years in Egypt," the *Times* said, "mere questioning about a novel's content by any religious faction is usually sufficient grounds to get it banned." One wonders how religious factions in Turkey reacted to the Islamic content of "My Name Is Red," which treats of the Islamic afterlife in deadpan detail, including "a portrayal of Our Exalted Prophet's bewilderment and ticklishness, as angels seized him by his underarms during his ascension to Heaven from the top of a minaret," and which investigates with what might seem blasphemous closeness the sacrilege lurking in pictorial representation.

"The maker of images or pictures is the enemy of God": thus Muhammad is alleged to have spoken in the collection of legends and sayings called the Hadith. Though the Koran contains no explicit prohibition of imagery, the Prophet, in the Hadith, says, "The angels will not enter a house in which there is a picture or a dog." Muhammadanism's iconoclasm, born of the fledgling monotheism's rivalry with pagan idolatry, has been variously enforced, depending on the ruler, in Islam's far-flung domains. Murat III, reigning in 1591, when this novel's events take place, was the Ottoman sultan with the warmest interest in books and miniatures in the Persian style. The heyday of Ottoman court painting ended with him, and its justification was always tenuous, as Black describes it:

> Pictures are forbidden by our faith. Because the illustrations of the Persian masters and even the masterpieces of the greatest masters of Herat are ultimately seen as an extension of border ornamentation, no one would take issue with them, reasoning that they enhanced the beauty of writing and the magnificence of calligraphy.

The miniaturists themselves knew they were treading, as it were, a fine line, on the edge of Allah's creative prerogatives. The style of the Persian masters—bright, unshaded colors; a high horizon; stylized faces; and little depth perspective—was designed to recall the world as Allah first saw it, freshly created. A traditionally depicted horse, say, shows Allah's idea of a horse, "the horse meticulously conceived by Allah." Human beings, too, are not meant "to resemble exactly those figures which we see around us. Quite to the contrary, they signify that they've emerged from Allah's memory. This is the reason why time has stopped for them within that picture." Miniatures depict this world "as if it were the Otherworld"; they summon us, through their beauty, "toward life's abundance, toward compassion, toward respect for the colors of the realm which God created, and toward reflection and faith." As the miniaturist called Butterfly puts it, "Yes, God must've wanted the art of illumination to be ecstasy so He could demonstrate how the world itself is ecstasy to those who see."

Yet seeing can become a temptation, and blindness—"a blessed darkness and the infinity of a blank page"—a virtuous renunciation. "Blindness is a realm of bliss from which the Devil and guilt are barred," the miniaturist called Olive asserts. In a realm so fraught with metaphysical nicety and deference, the advances of European painting form a perilous irruption, bringing with them "the violence implicit in the desire to be one-of-a-kind, unique and exceptional." The traditional masters often left their work unsigned, and suppressed the idiosyncrasies that might have constituted a personal style. Individual portraits quicken the heretical desire to be "different from all others." The portraitists "dare to situate their subjects in the center of the page, as if man were meant to be worshipped"; however ordinary the subject, he is placed "in the center of this world, where Our Sultan should've been." And objects in European perspective, with distant ones smaller than those in the foreground, "weren't depicted according to their importance in Allah's mind, but as they appeared to the naked eye—the way the Franks painted." When it is pointed out that "exalted Allah certainly sees everything we see," the rejoinder states, "He doesn't perceive it the way we do. The confused battle scene that we perceive in our bewilderment, He perceives in His omniscience as two opposing armies in an orderly array." Heresy hovers on all sides of the issue: the coffeehouse storyteller impudently raises the possibility that the classical miniaturists, in attempting to show not what they see but what God imagines, are "committing the sin of competing with Allah." The trend, however, as of 1591, is clear: Frankish painting and the egoistic delights of individualization will prove irresistible, and Turkish artists, the murderer tells his confreres in one of his many concluding pronouncements, henceforth can "sit yourselves down and do nothing but ape the Europeans century after century! Proudly sign your names to your imitation paintings."

Pamuk's consciousness of Turkey's fate of imitation and inauthenticity expresses itself in his characters' frequent feelings of detachment from their real selves. "I feel I'm living the present as if it were the past," the murderer says, and he watches his body commit a crime "as if it were a memory from long ago. You know how in dreams we shudder to see ourselves as if from the outside?" He warns that, if painters succumb to the Frankish manner, "we might resemble ourselves, but we won't be ourselves." Other selves haunt the innocent, too. Shekure says, "We reentered the house in the dead of night, and it suddenly seemed that the elongated shadows we were casting by the light of the oil lamp belonged to others." Later, "as I cried, it was as if I'd left myself and was becoming another, entirely separate woman.

Like some reader troubled by a sad picture in the pages of a book, I saw my life from the outside and pitied what I saw." The author, the contriver of these dozen intertwining viewpoints, is both outside and inside his fiction. Shekure's younger son is called Orhan, and it turns out to be he who, with her coöperation, has written this novel. In the proud fashion of Joyce finishing "Ulysses," Pamuk has dated "My Name Is Red" at the end: "1990-92, 1994-98." The novel bears traces of an interrupted composition, wherein the author had to get a fresh grip upon the many glittering threads of theory and incident. Orhan Pamuk's labor, in this otherworld of miniatures, was long, and the reader's labor at times feels long, between spells of being entranced and educated.

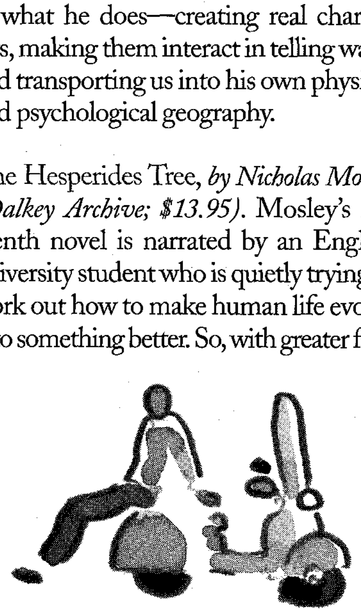
Translating from the Turkish, a non-Indo-European language with a grammar that puts the verb at the end of even the longest sentence, isn't a task for everybody; Erdağ Göknar deserves praise for the cool, smooth English in which he has rendered Pamuk's fine-spun sentences, passionate art appreciations, slyly pedantic debates, eerie urban scenes (it keeps snowing, which one doesn't think of as Istanbul weather), and exhaustive inventories. The inventory, Borges showed in his short story "The Aleph," evokes the terror of infinity; Pamuk gives us two pages describing miniatures through the ages, a paragraph crammed with the contents of the Sultan's Treasury, and a brisk list of Ottoman tortures. Göknar's English has such an air of classical timelessness that I was startled by the use, twice, of the word "ornery," with its flavor of American country dialect, and by the phrase "could care less" when the opposite was meant. And I was unable to detect what the title referred to. Murat III, my independent researches discovered, had "a long red beard," but the most likely source within the novel is the coffeehouse monologue supposedly delivered by the color crimson, a large pot of which is used to commit the second murder. The color of blood, it boasts, "As I bring my color to the page, it's as if I command the world to 'Be!' Yes, those who cannot see would deny it, but the truth is that I can be found everywhere." The world's name, in other words, is Red. ♦

# BRIEFLY NOTED

The Grand Complication, *by Allen Kurzweil (Hyperion; $24.95).* Puckish and erudite, Kurzweil's new novel is a book about books, and about people who live through books. Henry James Jesson III, the kind of wealthy eccentric who seems to exist only to send other men on wild-goose chases, hires Alexander Short, a down-on-his-luck librarian, to help solve the mystery of an eighteenth-century cabinet of wonders that is missing one of its objects. Eager to escape his problems with his wife, a French artist and pop-up-book designer, Short discovers that the missing item is a fantastically precise timepiece that allegedly belonged to Marie Antoinette, and he is soon consumed by the quest for the watch. Kurzweil's intricately constructed novel has no shortage of esoterica, and the author's fondness for sexual comedy supplies a welcome counterweight.

The Huntsman, *by Whitney Terrell (Viking; $25.95).* When a white woman's body is pulled from the river at the beginning of a novel and a black man is wanted for her murder, you expect an old-fashioned thriller. What Terrell provides instead is a Dreiseresque study of Kansas City in the nineties, in all its complicated manners and minutiae. An unsung corner of the American landscape, the city is the real hero here, as white and black, rich and poor, old and young collide. Terrell is not a wholly original writer, but he's excellent at what he does—creating real characters, making them interact in telling ways, and transporting us into his own physical and psychological geography.

The Hesperides Tree, *by Nicholas Mosley (Dalkey Archive; $13.95).* Mosley's fifteenth novel is narrated by an English university student who is quietly trying to work out how to make human life evolve into something better. So, with greater fanfare, is almost everyone he gets involved with, including an attractive student leader whom he impregnates; the woman she loves, who looks just like the narrator; a rich boy who is trying to hack into his father's cyberspace network; his media-emperor father; and a pair of gorgeous Irish twins, who may be anti-terrorists, eco-warriors, or the Hesperides, the mythological figures who guard the Tree of Life. And yet this potentially heavy tale of apocalypse is all suggestion, the strongest being for the reader to follow the example of the preoccupied narrator: to painstakingly observe, and to think.



The Artist's Wife, *by Max Phillips (Holt; $23).* Alma Mahler, the belle of Vienna's Belle Époque, pulled off an unusual grand slam, cuckolding the composer Gustav Mahler, the architect Walter Gropius, the painter Oskar Kokoschka, and the novelist Franz Werfel (accomplishing this last infidelity with a priest). This fictional memoir, narrated with sardonic omniscience after death, captures Alma's wit and scheming with a blend of historical detail and sensuality that recalls Michael Ondaatje, while subtly demonstrating how easily the salon chatter of Austrian intellectuals devolved into Nazism. Even in cronish decline, the heroine remains surprising, as when she and Werfel, refugees in L.A., see "Flash Gordon," their first talkie: "Why, Franz," Alma says, "it's like 'Siegfried' without wits!"

Grand Ambition, *by Lisa Michaels (Norton; $23.95).* This début novel takes inspiration from a historical footnote: in 1928, the newlyweds Glen and Bessie Hyde attempted to run the most treacherous rapids of the Colorado River; although their boat was recovered intact, their bodies were never found. This material might have produced a story of psychological disintegration and betrayal in the wilderness, but Michaels has a more delicate subject in mind: the emotional distances in even the best marriages. Bessie feels "awe and bitterness" toward her confident, single-minded husband, and the combination of his hubris and her fear carries them to a surprisingly tender end.

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

# ODD COUPLES

*American losers and Czech survivors.*

BY DAVID DENBY

Self-memorialization can be a drag, obsessive in-joking can be a bigger drag, and "crazy" comedies that string together casual episodes and smart-ass cameo performances by big stars can be the biggest drag of all. But Kevin Smith's "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back," which gleefully succumbs to all three of these sins, is pretty damn funny. Smith, who is thirty-one and the preëminent auteur of Red Bank, New Jersey, is the writer and director of "Clerks," "Chasing Amy," and other genially profane and blasphemous comedies about love, sex, and God; his new picture is both a summing up of his previous indiscretions and a firm goodbye to all that. Moviegoers who saw the 1994 "Clerks" may remember two stunningly unemployable young men, Jay (Jason Mewes) and Silent Bob (Smith himself), who stood at their posts outside a Quick Stop convenience store in Leonardo, New Jersey, dealing drugs, dancing, and proposing indecent acts to tough local women. In Smith's fictional world, these two, who have shown up in other Smith movies, have been enshrined in a comic book as Bluntman & Chronic. In the new movie, they discover that there is a Web site devoted to Bluntman & Chronic, and that a movie is going to be made about their adventures. Jay and Silent Bob have never heard of the Internet, but they're scandalized by a device that allows anonymous young punks in a chat room to make rude remarks about comic-book characters for which they are the originals. Despite repeated attempts to dissuade them, they figure that the only way to put an end to this outrageous abuse is to prevent the movie from being made. So they leave New Jersey and head for the Coast.

By launching these two ninnies in a vehicle about as sturdy as a candy wrapper, Smith took a considerable risk. But he knows what he's doing. All along, in Jay and Silent Bob's brief appearances, he has been reviving certain long-standing comedy conventions: Jay is a monomaniac who never shuts up, and Bob, frequently, is mute. They always wear the same clothes and do the same things; they are oblivious, caught, like all true comic types, in their own dream. Jay still wears a knit cap, but his blond hair has grown longer; he now looks like a stoned Viking. Blank-brained and hoarse-voiced, he is as obsessed as ever with obscene rant, in which he is invariably the hero. Jay is sublimely, mysteriously confident with women but as scoreless as a eunuch. As Jay delivers his tirades, Silent Bob, short, stout, and bearded, with a turned-around white cap and a long black coat, nods or gestures or looks crestfallen. He is Jay's partner and patsy. Jay insults him and ascribes outlandish opinions to him, and Kevin Smith responds with yearning eyes; it's possible that Silent Bob, though he is much smarter than Jay—who is an imbecile—enjoys Jay's blather and that his silence is Smith's tribute to the American losers who just won't quit.

Kevin Smith is a Catholic boy shocked by sex, particularly by female sexuality, whose workings are depicted in his movies as a wonderland deserving both astonishment and respect. Talking dirty has become Smith's alternate religion. But he's serious, in his way; in "Chasing Amy" he probably went further into a woman's sexual feelings than any other American writer-director of recent years, and he's remarkably ecumenical on the subject of homosexuality, which he re-

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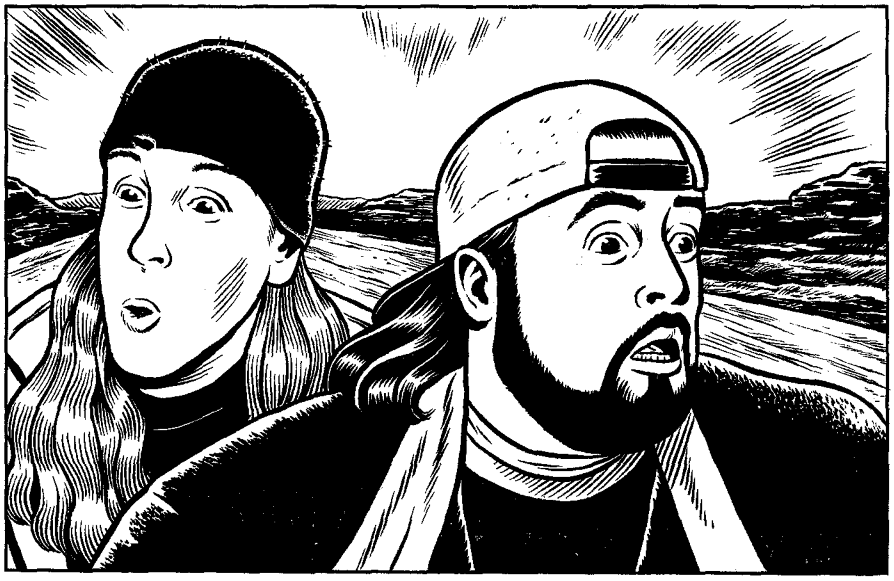
gards without fear. (The only fools in his movies are hetero male sexists.) A great deal of the sex talk is merely obsessional—the garrulous male theatre of the mind. But Smith, at least, has perfected what many people in popular culture are now looking for, a way of talking dirty and parodying talking dirty at the same time. If civilization is in a state of collapse (and it probably is), then Smith's movies, foul of mouth but clean in spirit, offer good-humored company on the way down.

"Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back" is a ragtag affair, in the tradition of such memorably silly and carefree movies as the Hope-Crosby "Road" series. Out on the eternal American highway, the boys run into four bad girls in a van, who persuade them to steal a monkey from a laboratory; they then get mistaken for members of a terrorist group that uses the name of a sensitive part of the female anatomy as its acronym. Mostly, they make a journey through the movies; they tease Smith's longtime patron, Miramax Pictures, and, once in Hollywood, they run into Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, who appeared in Smith's movie "Dogma" and who are now shooting a mock sequel to "Good Will Hunting." Off camera, Damon and Affleck ridicule each other's careers, and Jason Biggs, of "American Pie," stumbles into the movie and complains that he will be forever known as the actor who had carnal knowledge of a pastry. Chris Rock turns up as a shrilly racist black director who insists that he invented the prototype for "Sesame Street." No one escapes the general derision, including star Miramax directors like Wes Craven and Gus Van Sant. Smith dances his way through movies—his own and other people's. After a flourishing career as an independent, he can claim a place in Hollywood only by cleansing it of phonyness, pretense, and all forms of vulgarity except his own. Having shown himself loyal to his Jersey roots in his portraits of losers, clerks, and other denizens of semi-depressed American life, he has earned the right to celebrate his own cult. And, now that he's stuck his head out of the rabbit hole, it could be amazing to see what he discovers once he takes a look around.



*Jason Mewes and Kevin Smith in "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back."*

MARK ZINGARELLI

What is the nature of a true hero? Fierce, resolute, and forever consistent? Or flexible, many-sided, and ironical? Is Prince Hal necessarily a greater man than Falstaff? This is one of many questions raised by "Fighter," a brilliant documentary record of a tangled and combative relationship between a pair of Shakespearean personalities, Jan Wiener and Arnošt Lustig, Czech Jews who outlasted the Nazi Occupation and the Stalinist secret police and wound up as émigrés in America, where they met and became friends. Lustig, seventy-two, is a prolific novelist, memoirist, and screenwriter who had long wanted to tell the story of Jan Wiener—a wartime hero who escaped from Occupied Prague in 1940, made a hazardous trip through Yugoslavia and Italy, and, eventually, at the end of the war, flew as a pilot for the R.A.F. The young American filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev was planning to visit Europe with Wiener; he decided to bring Lustig along as an interlocutor and commentator. This idea turned out to be a piece of mischief, for, as Wiener and Lustig get back to Prague and then retrace Wiener's escape route, their friendship begins to unravel. This unusually cogent and complexly structured documentary becomes, all at once, a kind of existential travelogue, an interrogation of memory, and a comedy of temperament. Wiener, extraordinarily handsome at the age of seventy-seven, with snowy hair and a stiff, almost Prussian mustache, is a Jew who refused to be a victim. Since the war, making his living as a university instructor, he has fashioned his nature around the iron lesson of his survival—the unfailing pugnacity that became his defense, his weapon, his story, and his legend. Lustig admires him enormously, but he is jealous, perhaps, of Wiener's bravery and physical beauty, and he can't stop teasing and unsettling him. He suggests that during the war Wiener used his looks to attract people who agreed to help him, that his survival has more ambiguous meanings than the angry certainty of pure will that Wiener wrings out of it. Lustig himself made some compromises to get by in the Communist period (Wiener is contemptuous of his acts); he doesn't think that rage is necessarily the best response to every situation in life. He's a joyous man, a bon vivant, witty and malicious, and Wiener, still suffering from wartime humiliations and offended by Lustig's sallies, retreats from him and falls into his habitual fury. By the end of the journey, Wiener sees his old friend as a trifler; Lustig sees *his* friend as disfigured by a hatred he cannot leave behind. As they travel, they act out the clash between warrior and artist, moralist and philosopher, and Bar-Lev catches the ideal possibilities of both temperaments, weaving into the journey documentary footage of the Nazi and Communist periods which adds shades of tragedy and farce to the personal disputes. No one could want to go through what these two endured, but they remain, even in this comical odd-couple struggle, admirable witnesses of the savage century gone by. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY CALVIN TRILLIN

# LIFE ON THE RANCH

*(Measured by the same yardstick as life in Washington.)*

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 20—President George W. Bush's failure to catch a fish after he spent two hours on his heavily stocked bass pond this afternoon was considered a defeat for Mr. Bush by most observers here, and one that would weaken his position in swapping fish stories with Democrats and Republican moderates in Congress. A White House spokesman's comment that the President, being a serious conservationist, had "done catch-and-release one better" may have only worsened matters, since most of the press corps dismissed it as a desperate attempt at spin.

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 21—The President scored a solid victory today by working on the clearing of his nature trail for an hour and a half without injuring himself.

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 22—Eating scrambled eggs this morning for breakfast was seen as a victory for the President, who had been having his eggs sunny-side up for more than a week. The President prefers his eggs scrambled. White House officials have been unwilling to discuss the reasoning behind the apparently contradictory sunny-side-up policy. However, they are not directly denying a story that the Crawford ranch's cook, Rosa Gonzales, had refused to serve scrambled eggs ever since the President, in an effort to compliment her, tried to pronounce the dish in Spanish—*huevos revueltos*—and came out with something that Ms. Gonzales understood as "very revolting." It is not clear how the situation was resolved in a manner that permitted a return to scrambled eggs this morning, but White House officials did little to hide their jubilation.

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 23—White House spokesmen refused to elaborate on a terse announcement this morning that a two-year-old Hereford steer on the Bush ranch had stepped into a gopher hole and broken its leg—a defeat for the President.

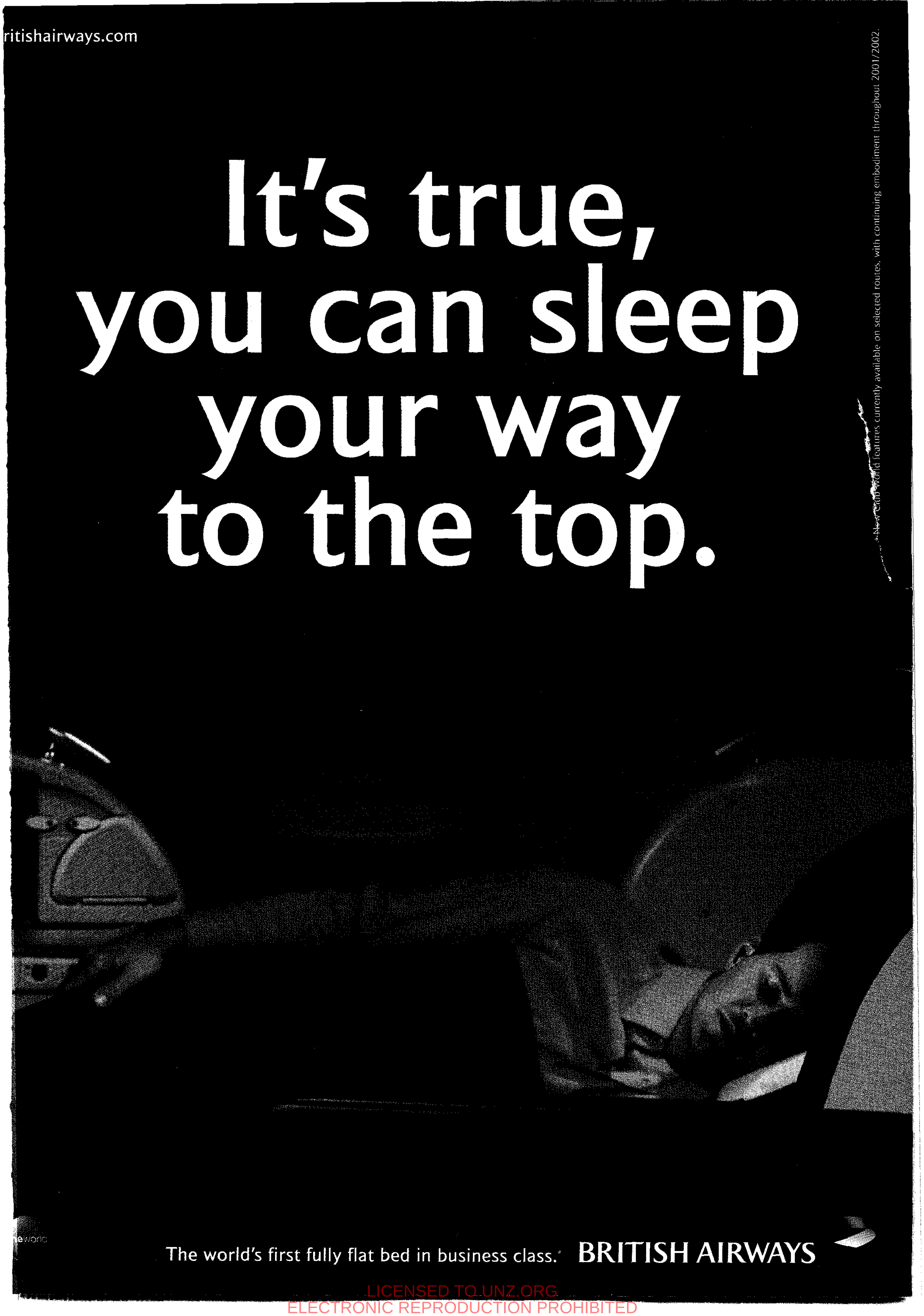
CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 24—Even George W. Bush's harshest critics are acknowledging today that the weather has given the President an important victory. "The entire country has been suffering from a heat wave," said a member of the White House staff who has been at the President's ranch for three weeks, "but there can't be any place quite as miserable as this." Daniel Jonas, a Democratic pollster who specializes in issues of empathy, said, "Let's face it: this is a big one for Bush."

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 25—George W. Bush was served *huevos rancheros* for breakfast today—a serious defeat for the President, who does not like highly spiced food.

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 26—Republicans both here and in Washington were glowing today after George W. Bush apparently scored a big victory by losing at golf. "He's just a regular guy with a bad slice," one Party loyalist said. "He knows loss. He understands loss." The low scorer in the foursome, a wealthy oilman from Lubbock, won ten dollars from each of the other players. Late this afternoon, Democrats were saying that the episode might prove to be a defeat for Mr. Bush now that it is known that longtime family friends of the President's parents came forward on the eighteenth green to cover his losses.

CRAWFORD, Tex., Aug. 27—President Bush scored his biggest victory of the week this morning when Rosa Gonzales, his cook, posed, smiling, for a picture with him in the kitchen of the Crawford ranch. Although Ms. Gonzales has not been made available for interviews, the White House has formally denied that she ever referred to the President as "*la boquita de un gringo puro*"—roughly, "little gringo mouth." In response to reporters' questions at the photo opportunity, the President explained his views on how best to prepare eggs by saying that he is a uniter, not a divider. H. Cole Knudnik, an expert on Presidential diet at the Brookings Institution, said, "The President was overdue for a clear-cut victory on this one, and he got it." ♦

BARRY BLITT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